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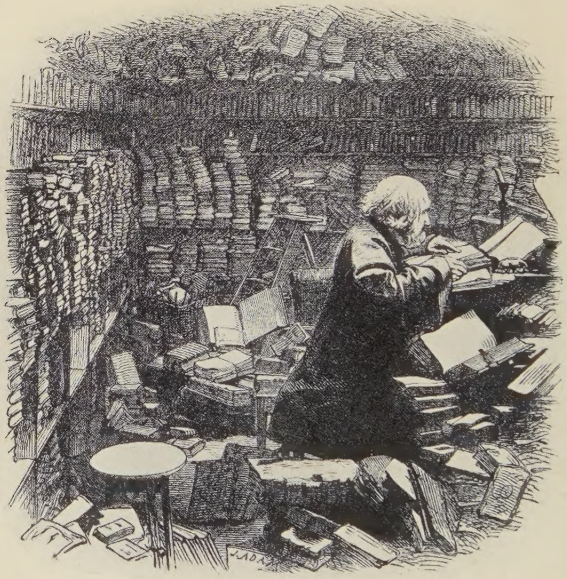
PENNY WISE AND BOOK FOOLISH



FIRST EDITIONS ✡ PRESENTATIONS

CATALOGUES ✡ BOOKPLATES ✡ AUTOGRAPHS

TAMERLANE ✡ THE DIAMOND IN ✡ THE DUST HEAP

PENNY WISE

AND

BOOK FOOLISH

BY

VINCENT STARRETT

NEW YORK
COVICI FRIEDE PUBLISHERS
1929

COLLECTING ✡ REBINDING

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TYPOGRAPHY BY S. A. JACOBS
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To

M. J. LATIMER, M.D.

My Doctor & My Friend

TO THE GENTLE READER: PECCAVI!

THERE is much talk of market values and of prices in these pages, for which I am sorry; but it had to be. Let him who thinks only of a book's spiritual or sentimental values forgive me, then persevere in his reading beyond the first few chapters. In those that follow, it may be that he shall find talk of the beauty and the solace of books and of the sheer happiness of acquiring them for themselves. There may be also, and indeed there are, in those later chapters, certain whimsical reflections—of a proprietary nature, perhaps, but general enough for all that—upon the pleasant pastime of book collecting, and other kindred matters that I much prefer to write about than about dollars. For the bragging that I have done in this book there is, I realize, less excuse than I have found for my other sins. I can but ask the reader's indulgence and defy him, if he be a collector, to throw the first stone. God help us all!

V. S.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

A NUMBER of the chapters in this volume first appeared as special articles in the *Saturday Evening Post*, *The Independent*, *McNaught's Monthly*, the *Freeman*, and *Book Notes*, to the editors of which journals I am grateful for courteous permission to reprint.

V. S.

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HAVE YOU A TAMERLANE IN YOUR ATTIC?

HAVE YOU A TAMERLANE IN YOUR ATTIC?

Deep down at the bottom of his erring, optimistic heart, every book collector in Christendom probably believes that the day will come. There is nothing cryptic in the phrase. He means that some day, sooner or later, standing beside the ten-cent basket, before an obscure little bookstall, idly pawing over the miscellany of worthless bibelots offered at that reckless sum, he will turn up a little pamphlet in tea-colored wrappers, upon whose title page he will read the legend, *Tamerlane and Other Poems. By a Bostonian.* Paradoxically, the reason he believes this is that only six copies of the work are known to exist.*

An Oriental monarch, decrepit and dying, pours into the ears of an attending friar—in whose incongruity an author's note acquiesces—the tale of his early peasant life, his passion for a lovely maiden, his

* Only four had been found when this chapter was first published, in the *Saturday Evening Post.* As a result of that publication, a fifth copy came to light in a Worcester (Mass.) attic, and I managed to lose it, through my own procrastination and the impatience of the frantic possessor. It was sold for $10,000 and immediately resold at a handsome profit. Since that time, the sixth copy has turned up, but information about it is not available.

ambition to win power for her sake, his unexplained desertion of the enchantress, his adventures and conquests culminating in his assumption of the rôle of Khan of Tartary, his return to his native valley to take possession of his love, and his discovery of the heartbroken lady's grave. She had been dead, alas, for many a year. . . .

What was there left for me now? despair—
A kingdom for a broken heart.

That, to misquote Oscar Wegelin, is what the collector of rare books will read if he finds the volume, or rather, what he will find if he reads it. A stupid tale of a stupid monarch, expecting his light o' love to sit and smile through seven years of desertion, keeping her beauty untarnished for him, if he should happen to return to her. Obviously, the literary and philosophic content of the scarce pamphlet is not the lure that attracts our snooping Autolycus of the bookstalls. What then? There is no secret about it. Everybody knows what I am talking about. The trifle was the first published performance of Edgar Allan Poe, and the most recent recorded price paid for a copy was $10,000.

Well, they do turn up. Six of them have turned up since 1860, when Henry Stevens, of Vermont, sent the first discovered copy to the British Museum; and, in 1867, the machinery of the museum at length having reached the grimy little pamphlet with its outer covers

TAMERLANE

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY A BOSTONIAN.

Young heads are giddy, and young hearts are warm,
And make mistakes for manhood to reform.—COWPER.

BOSTON:
CALVIN F. S. THOMAS.....PRINTER.

1827.

gone, received for it a shilling. But how often they do not turn up! Frankly, I have stopped looking for the thing. I no more than glance at a volume whose appearance remotely suggests it. Since adopting this sane attitude of renunciation, I have been happier and have slept better o' nights. I now smile whimsically and tolerantly at poor Will Douglass, who has been looking for a *Tamerlane* for forty-five years, and is still looking. I take a great deal more pleasure out of living, and in watching others hunt. It has been my happiness to start many earnest searchers on the endless trail, and it is my boast that I have disrupted more homes than all the divorce courts in the land. That is not perhaps strictly true; but my victims, if laid end to end, would reach from Nevada to the Golden Gate. Poor, eager, amiable, fatuous idiots! They even thank me for the tip.

Seriously, there is nothing more certain to break up a gathering of whatever nature than a brief statement of the rarity and value of a copy of *Tamerlane*. Bridge parties disintegrate before the magic of that name and the resounding sum for which it stands. Nearly every person to whom I have told the tale is certain that there is a copy in his attic; usually a relic of his grandfather's library. He has seen it; he recognizes it by every descriptive point furnished him; he *knows* it is there. The only thing he professes not

to have known is that the author of the opus was Poe. If I will guarantee the price, he will guarantee the book. He earnestly collects his wife and children and rushes home. Days are spent rummaging in the attic. Trunks are overhauled and cedar chests are all but pulled to pieces. Frantic letters are dispatched to Aunt Lou and Uncle Dan. Nothing, of course, ever comes of it. Indubitable first editions of *Snow-Bound* and *The Vision of Sir Launfal*—even of the Rev. E. P. Roe—come to light in the chaotic resurrection; but *Tamerlane* remains always in concealment. It existed only in the heated imagination of the searcher.

It must have happened often, much as I have described it. Third parties, listening in, catch the purport of the communication and quietly disappear. I always know where they have gone. They have gone home to turn the attic inside out. I am a bit ashamed of myself about it all; but on the foundation of what the mischievous trick has taught me of human nature, of greed, of envy, of ignorance, of cunning, even of superstition, I could build, I am sure, a new and devastating philosophy. Only once have I been fooled by a victim's earnestness. She was so very positive that I had no choice but to believe her. The incident began at a card party to which, unwillingly, I had been dragged. It was an objectionable affair, conducted by imbeciles for other imbeciles. I doubt if any member

of the group had read a book through since childhood, or had heard of Edgar Poe to remember the name. Cross-word puzzles had not then come along, to make necessary a knowledge of three-letter words. The conversation was moronic and the air stifling, when into the unhappy situation I dropped the bombshell of *Tamerlane*. It was difficult to bring the conversation to that point, but I managed it.

"Ever hear of it?" I casually inquired.

One or two of the men grunted, whether in assent or negation I could not say.

"It's really quite a rare book," I continued, not too enthusiastically.

"Yeh?" inquired somebody.

"Yes, indeed," I said. "It's worth anything from ten thousand up."

A glassy silence fell upon that company. Immediately everybody in the room was looking at me. In the glances were disbelief, amazement, stupefaction and something like horror.

Finally a man said, "What are you giving us?"

I retorted by giving them the story, and after that the inquiries fell thick and fast. Suddenly everybody was desperately interested in the first published volume of Edgar Allan Poe. At once several of the women clearly remembered having seen the book in their father's or their grandfather's library:

"He was a great one for books, you know. I suppose he had—well, hundreds of them!"

At a neighboring table, a stout dowager in creased satin appeared to be having an apoplectic seizure. She was red and gasping. In her eyes were little covetous points of steel. In a cataract of bungled pronouns, the seizure came out.

She had the very book at home in her own bookcase at that moment!

Surprising as was the intelligence that the lady had a bookcase, I passed the point and deprecatingly smiled. The torrent of words continued. Was it a little thing about so big? Was it in paper covers? Did it have Poe's name on the wrapper? No? *She knew it*! At every point the ten-thousand-dollar rarity checked with the copy in her bookcase. It had been her grandfather's, then her father's, and now it was hers. She was going home to get it!

The rest of the company was as excited as she, and a vague doubt was gnawing at my heart. A doubt of myself, of my cynical and infallible self. After all, she might have the thing! With one arm in a sleeve of her jacket, she wheeled about. Could she depend upon my figures? Would I undertake to get her ten thousand dollars for the book? I swallowed hard and nodded.

Then, as an idea struck me, I said, "I'll give you five thousand dollars myself for it and risk getting the rest

of it from a dealer. Whatever I get over five thousand I shall keep as my profit."

If she did have the item, I saw no reason why I should not be paid for my knowledge and for the information.

She considered this sporting proposition only for an instant. Then, "I'll sell it myself," she announced, and got her second arm into its corresponding sleeve. "Perhaps," she added, "you would like to come with me. I'd like to have you see it, you know. You'll see that I'm right. I can see it now. About so big, paper covers, and no name of the author. Why, I even remember the name—*Tamerlane*!"

By this time I was almost as excited as the lady herself. My enthusiasm, running amuck, had carried me past all my own danger signals.

"Come on!" I said, and hurried out to call a taxi.

Half an hour later, with audibly pumping hearts, we entered her apartment and plunged for the bookcase. With a shout of triumph, the stout lady snatched a volume from an upper shelf and started to hand it to me. Then her jaw dropped and her eyes pushed out. Her huge body seemed to sag at all points. She was a ludicrous and pathetic figure. Silently I took the volume from her hand. It was twice as large as the item she had earlier indicated; it was bound in dull green cloth with gold lettering; it was beyond a question of

doubt an early American edition of Tennyson's *Locksley Hall.*

I have never since been fooled.* However earnestly the tale is told, I grin, and know that the volume my victim is talking about is *Locksley Hall*, or *Enoch Arden*, or the *Tales of a Wayside Inn.*

All this, of course, is mean and malicious; but I feel mean and malicious toward the sort of person whom I make my victim. An intelligent booklover, or a cultured citizen, learning that only six copies of the brochure had turned up in more than sixty years, would refuse to become excited. He would realize the odds against him, even with his grandfather's library to draw upon. For the rest, I am content to drive them to the attics of the world.

But what mad times those were, back in the days when I still believed that some day *I* should find a *Tamerlane*, under a heap of government reports, in a dusty barrow, or bound up with other odds and ends in one of those queer, calf-raimented galaxies, or miscellanies, our forefathers liked to compile. The days I have spent in ancient bookshops, browsing among forgotten volumes, not specifically looking for a *Tamerlane*, but not for a moment forgetting the possibility of its resurrection. The day Ben Hecht and I went ferreting, at the sardonic direction of a mysterious

* See previous note.

TAMERLANE

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY A BOSTONIAN

Young heads are giddy and young hearts are warm
And make mistakes for manhood to reform.
COWPER

BOSTON
CALVIN F. S. THOMAS . . . PRINTER
1827

and ghostly "Mr. Wilson." We were cubs, then, on the old *Chicago Daily News*, and we spent our luncheon money and our luncheon periods in the lurking-spots of literary treasure. Ben, for some reason that he has forgotten and will deny, became interested in the manifestations of *Ouija*, and brought his board to the office. We worked at the thing after hours.

"What is the rarest book in the world?" he asked, one day.

"*Tamerlane*," said I, promptly; although probably it wasn't, and isn't.

"What's it worth?" pertinently continued my fellow-mystic.

I told him. He drew a long breath, and whistled a little tune. Then he bent lower over the varnished board, as if to coax it to his mood.

"Let's see if 'Mr. Wilson' knows where there is a copy," said he.

And "Mr. Wilson" knew!

He spelled it out very cleverly for us, answering all our eager questionings as we would have had them answered. There was a copy of *Tamerlane*, it appeared, at Jansky's bookshop, a miniature *libreria* conducted in a hole in the wall in Adams Street, once occupied by a bootblack. Did Jansky know it was there? we asked; and waited breathlessly for the board to move. He did not! A final question: just where

was the book? A pause, and then we had our answer: the book was in the ten-cent case in front of the shop!

We pushed the board away, ungratefully, and stood up.

"Does he have a ten-cent case, out in front?" asked Ben doubtfully. But I assured him that that much was true.

"Then come on!" he breathed.

I shall not further embarrass this distinguished novelist by a recital of his subsequent burrowings and breathings, his groanings and squirmings, sometimes on hands and knees, as we ransacked the ten-cent container of Mr. Anton Jansky. It is sufficient to record that "Mr. Wilson" was an obliging liar, and that from that moment we lost faith in him.

And poor Will Douglass is still looking for *his* copy. He is as optimistic as ever, although his hair has turned white since he began his search. Perhaps he is a bit *more* optimistic than ever. He now believes that when Calvin F. S. Thomas, who published the volume, back in 1827, moved westward with his family he boxed up the remainder of the edition and brought it west with him. Douglass expects, sooner or later, to find the missing box. If he does, he will not, however, flood the market with the priceless works. He will hide them away very carefully, and "discover" one every two or three years, until he is comfortably well off.

It is a good scheme; I have often heard it outlined.

As to the real *Tamerlane*, there is little enough that can be told. Calvin F. S. Thomas published it in Boston, in 1827. He died, it is believed, in Springfield, Missouri, in 1876. No other volume with his imprint is known to collectors. It is possible that he never found out who his eccentric and penniless customer was. What became of the bulk of the edition is the merest conjecture. Certainly something drastic occurred to make the tiny volume the rarest of its kind. The story goes that less than a dozen copies were sold when the edition was placed on the market, and that Poe, in a rage, called in and destroyed the rest. It is a plausible tale, but I believe it to be apocryphal. And there is a legend of a Boston bookseller who, late in his career, vaguely recalled having destroyed a publisher's "remainder" of a small volume in wrappers, long years before. He rather thought it *might* have been the *Tamerlanes*! But that, too, is only a story. Of the six copies known to exist, one, as stated, is in the British Museum, and the others are in the libraries of wealthy collectors.

That other copies exist somewhere seems more than likely; but only heaven knows where. Meanwhile the devoted collector still dreams of the day that will mark the crowning achievement of his dubious career. When it arrives, he will see a tiny pamphlet measuring six

and three-eighths by four and one-eighth inches, in tea-colored wrappers, the title page of which will read, *Tamerlane and Other Poems. By a Bostonian. Boston: Calvin F. S. Thomas, Printer. 1827.* And between the "Bostonian" and "Boston" two lines quoted from Cowper. There are forty pages all told, and the item is distinguished chiefly by its insignificance.

It is worth ten thousand dollars!

Perhaps there is one in your attic!

THE DIAMOND IN THE DUST HEAP

THE DIAMOND IN THE DUST HEAP

Once upon a time two men went from America to England by the same boat. They were civilized citizens of culture and breeding, and both were fond of books. When they reached London, in the usual drizzle of rain, they separated and went their respective ways. One hurried off to Westminster Abbey, and doffed his hat to the mighty dead. The other pulled his cap down more tightly upon his head, and stood for two hours before the shilling book barrows in Charing Cross Road.

That is a fable, as witness the first four words. I am not sure that there is a moral to it, but if there is, perhaps it is to be found in the varying points of view. The Abbey is a mausoleum; the book barrows are resurrection grounds. Only an incurable collector of old books, of course, would discover such a moral. The right sort of fellow, no doubt, would visit both the Abbey and Charing Cross Road. I shall not insist upon the moral. Too, my fable might have been written about any of the capitals of the world, for each has its outstanding show places, sacred to literary tradition,

and each its obscure Meccas whose clandestine celebrity is known principally to the specialist. And my two visitors, I am sure, enjoyed themselves hugely, each in his own way. My own way, however, happens to be the way that leads to Charing Cross Road and the shilling book barrows.

There is really much happiness to be found under the hospitable awnings of the second-hand bookshops of the world, and—since in this day it would often seem that financial success alone justifies one's effort in whatever line—no little profit. It is, for instance, possible to pay the expenses of a European jaunt out of the sale proceeds of one's book hunting. All that is necessary is patience, unparalleled luck, and a thorough knowledge of rare book values in the American market. Add to this a genuine passion for books, a real affection for dusty corners and tall ladders, leisure to conduct an indefinite search, and sufficient funds to insure all liabilities incurred in advance of the final unloading, and the trick is no trick at all. Sooner or later, the expedition justifies itself in American dollars. The patience and perseverance are inherent virtues, the luck is a matter of luck, and the passion for books and book dust can hardly be acquired as are mathematics and measles; but providentially supplied in these departments, the rest can be arranged. One may work for the funds and for the

THE SECOND FUNERAL

AND

THE CHRONICLE OF THE DRUM.

By Mr M. A. TITMARSH.

LONDON:—HUGH CUNNINGHAM, ST. MARTIN'S PLACE.
TRAFALGAR SQUARE.

leisure, while all the requisite knowledge of values may be achieved in ten or fifteen years of diligent catalogue reading. The textbooks, at least, are free and not at all rare. Any number may be procured for the price of a dozen postal cards.

It may be that, to the amateur, the probation period of a collector will seem long, and the apprenticeship difficult; in which case he will do well to stick to postage stamps or the collecting of baking-powder tins. If, however, for sheer love of the game, the pursuit as well as the capture, the satisfaction of ownership as well as the excitements of the chase, he elects to continue to the bitter end, let him be sure that the happiest of hunting grounds is his to exploit while life endures —and the profits, in due time, will take care of themselves.

One hears of the golden age of book collecting, and the temptation is to mourn for that vanished age, until one discovers that each repetition of the phrase refers to another and different age. One reads of the triumphs of Heber and Huth, of Henry Stevens and Buxton Forman, of Andrew Lang and De Witt Miller, all notable collectors of their time, and one weeps for the passing of a day when book collecting *was* book collecting; when *Omar Khayyam* was to be had for tuppence, and Swinburne firsts were on every stall. One dreams of *Tamerlane* and *The*

Second Funeral of Napoleon as in youth one dreamed of dimes and quarters beneath old sidewalks; and, waking, one curses the barren day that lies beneath one's windows. But in time one realizes that the golden age of book collecting is here and now, and that it behooves one to take advantage of it. From this point dates one's emancipation, and Poe and Thackeray, FitzGerald, Keats and Dickens are left to the millionaires. In their stead, one rears the images—at least, the facsimile title-pages—of Cabell and Mencken, Robinson, Hergesheimer and Miss Millay; of Frank Norris and Stephen Crane, and Bierce and Masters and Machen and Morley; of Conrad and Hardy and Dreiser. It is a good list, and in the matter of antiquarian values, the sober fact is that the rarer editions of these writers bring higher prices in the market than similar works ever brought before. The brochures and octavos of these gentlemen and Miss Millay are the diamonds in the dust heaps of today. They are the *Tamerlanes* and *Omars* of tomorrow.

No longer ago than 1881 there was issued from a press in Hereford, England, a little pamphlet of sixteen pages, of which today only a single copy is known to survive. Its title is *Eleusinia*, and its author is asserted to have been "a Student of H. C. S."—that is, of Hereford Cathedral School. Mr. Arthur Machen was seventeen years of age when he caused this, his

first opus, to be printed by the local stationer; and today Mr. Machen has the only copy known to be in existence.* Where the others have gone, heaven perhaps knows; Mr. Machen has no idea, nor have the booksellers of England. But if its author cared to part with that lone copy that was his father's, there are a number of collectors who would be happy to purchase it at his own figure.† Not to be extravagant, I should say that it would bring him two or three hundred dollars tomorrow, and in twenty years, if it remained without a twin, something more than twice that. In one hundred years, if it were still single, I am sure that it would be priceless. Discovery of two or three other copies would not materially injure its value as a rarity, and somewhere in the world it is more than probable that other copies exist, a few straggling survivors of time and change and the frenzies of house cleaning. And who shall say in what dusty shilling barrow they may turn up?

Rare, too, and commanding a handsome figure, is Mr. Machen's second venture into print, a curious and engaging bit of philosophy called *The Anatomy of Tobacco*. The little book is far from easy to come

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* A second copy has come to light, in America. It was picked up in a Washington (D. C.) bookshop, for less than a dollar.
† One has done so, in recent months.

by, and every year it becomes more recalcitrant. The author's name is not upon the title page; the trifle purports to be the work of one Leolinus Siluriensis, and as a rule its vegetable vellum covers are sadly spotted by time, although the year 1884 saw its initial bow to a cold and unreceptive public. I was fortunate in learning of the true authorship of this item some years before the information became general, and I devoted myself earnestly to the task of capturing as many copies as possible before the inevitable revelation that would kite its value to an altitude beyond my reach. In three years I ran down and garnered three copies, two of which I subsequently sold at a very handsome advance upon the original purchase price. Needless to say, they are no longer listed in modest catalogues at three shillings, under the caption Tobacco; but that, on an average, is what mine cost me, and I ordered them from just such catalogues.

A few years ago, while employed by an afternoon newspaper, I passed the door of a small bookshop in Chicago, and paused to investigate a box of paperbacks. The price asked for the books was not exorbitant; they were offered at ten cents apiece for as many as one wanted. I pawed idly for a few moments, and then turned up a familiar title—*The Misadventures of John Nicholson.* The author was

Robert Louis Stevenson. A line from a catalogue entered my head, and suddenly it occurred to me that this was the rare pirated edition that had appeared in America some months in advance of the authorized London edition; an unlovely affair on cheap paper, made for train butchers to sell to passengers, but an indubitable first edition of which only a few copies were known. It was quite fresh and new, and I wasted no time in buying it. There were no other copies in the box; I had discovered that fact rapidly. But as I paid over my ten cents I casually remarked, "Those paperbacks seem to be in pretty good shape for such old books!"

The dealer agreed with me. "I bought a job lot of them from the publisher," he said. "He's been out of business for some years, and these were in a warehouse somewhere, gathering dust. I took all he had. There's about a thousand more back there under the stairs."

I did not know whether to shout or to faint. And I had an assignment to cover, and a story to write. "I should like to look them over," I said, at length, "but I haven't time now. I'll drop in later in the day." Then I hurried away to my task, rushed back to the office, and worked feverishly until three o'clock. When I had finished I sped back to the bookshop, fearing that someone would be ahead of me. But the

shop was empty, and the books had not been touched. There they were, a thousand of them, more or less, piled under the stairs.

I took off my coat and set to work, and in an hour I had toiled through the lot. Every title in a list of popular reprints was there, including a number of Stevenson's; and there were exactly five more copies of *The Misadventures of John Nicholson.* Of all John Nicholson's misadventures, it occurred to me that this was the most amusing. I bought all five, greatly to the astonishment of the dealer, who as I left the shop eyed me with deep suspicion, and putting them in my bag I went at once to another shop, famous throughout the world, whose proprietor knew a great deal about rare volumes. There I produced a single copy of my six, and asked what he would pay for it. He examined the thing carefully, commented on its exceptional condition, and agreed to pay thirty dollars, which I accepted.

A week later, I sold him another copy for thirty dollars, and he smelled a rat.

"Look here," he said, with a shrewd smile, "you've found a nest of these some place. Exactly how many have you?"

"You've just bought two," I replied, "and I have four left."

"I'll have to buy 'em all to protect my first invest-

ment," he grumbled. "I'll give you twenty-five dollars apiece for the others."

"No," I said, "I want one for my own library; but you may have the other three."

I took my check, and decided that I had done a very good day's work.

"But if you find any more," added the bookseller, "put 'em in the fire. It'll take me three years to get rid of these."

I didn't find any more, but two months later a collector in Boston discovered another pirated edition of *Nicholson* that antedated my edition by about two weeks; the date on the paper wrapper proved it beyond question. It was a very important discovery, from a bibliographical point of view; and I was very glad that I had not waited to sell my first five until I could get more money. The copy that I kept I still have. It is worth, I suppose, about ten cents today.

That was one of my earliest adventures, and I remember it with great happiness, although I have made many more important finds since. It illustrates rather neatly one thing that will bear remembering about pirated editions: they may be first editions and they may not; that is to say, there may be another pirated edition that is a little more first, as it were.

If I were asked to name the rarest item among contemporaneous American first editions I should think

hard for some moments, but in the end I should probably name one of two small brochures. I should name, I think, either Edwin Arlington Robinson's tiny pamphlet, *The Torrent and The Night Before*, or H. L. Mencken's *Ventures Into Verse*. Both may be accurately described as frightfully rare. It will be a surprise to many, no doubt, to read that Mencken has ever condescended to verse; but it is quite, quite true, and the dabbler in second-hand bookstalls will do well to keep at least one eye open for the result of those early lispings, as well as for the Robinson opus. Both are mere pamphlets, and neither is so very old. Mr. Robinson's was privately printed in 1896, and was immediately distributed, for the most part to friends. Mr. Mencken's appeared, without any convulsions of nature, in 1901, and went much the same way. One is poetry, and the other, I am sorry to say, is not; but they are almost equally rare today, and probably the psychology of rarity has fixed their value to the collector at about the same figure. I have heard of a copy of Mr. Robinson's brochure changing hands at a figure in excess of a hundred and fifty dollars, and I have no doubt that Mr. Mencken would pay as much for a copy of *Ventures Into Verse*.

The former work is almost a legend. I have never seen it, although I know it exists. The *Ventures* I

have seen; indeed, I once owned a copy. I found it in a Chicago bookshop, marked at fifty cents, and that is the sum I paid for it. It had been sold to the dealer by a reviewer for a local poetry magazine. That was before the present vogue of Mr. Mencken; but as editor of *The Smart Set* he had been kind to me, and I yielded to the impulse to buy his poems. They were terrible. Some years later, in a thoughtless moment, I mentioned the verses to Mr. Mencken in a letter.

In his reply he set forth that he was surprised to hear that I had the book. He had only one copy himself, it seemed, and that was so mutilated as to be incomplete. He would take it as a favor if I would send him mine, and would send me another book in exchange. "I had a sweet soul in those days," he wrote.

I gracefully yielded my copy, received two books in exchange, handsomely inscribed, and was for a time satisfied. I liked to think of Mr. Mencken made happy by my unmutilated copy of *Ventures Into Verse*, and thought I had done a Christian act. Mr. Mencken, I am sure, thought so, too, for I have long since reached the conclusion that he instantly destroyed it.

Then there is Robinson's second production, *The Children of the Night*, a volume of admirable poetry, published by a small Boston house, in 1897. It is

excessively rare and desirable. The last copy I saw advertised for sale was priced at seventy-five dollars, which seemed to me not unreasonable. I have clung grimly to my copy for ten years now, in spite of flattering offers. It came to me from Ben Hecht, once an amateur collector, in exchange for something crude and powerful and very Russian, the name of which I have forgotten, and which I do not miss. But I do miss my first edition of the *Spoon River Anthology*, which idiotically I sold for six dollars and a copy of a later printing—a few years before it went to fifty. I shall not make that mistake again. Like *Leaves of Grass*, another great rarity in its original edition, the *Anthology* was a new note, a genuine departure, and it has become a permanent addition to literature.

Still other volumes of merit that classify as desiderata, and which in time will bring large sums in the auction market, are Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, A. A. Milne's *When We Were Very Young*, Frank Norris's *Yvernelle*, Miss Millay's *Renascence*, and Stephen Crane's *Maggie*. Yet *Renascence* goes back only to 1917, *Yvernelle* was published no longer ago than 1892, *When We Were Very Young* has not quite reached its fifth birthday, and *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* is dated as recently as 1927. The prices asked today are quite

POEMS,

CHIEFLY IN THE

SCOTTISH DIALECT,

BY

ROBERT BURNS.

THE Simple Bard, unbroke by rules of Art
He pours the wild effusions of the heart:
And if inſpir'd, tis Nature's pow'rs inſpire;
Her's all the melting thrill, and her's the kindling fire.

ANONYMOUS.

KILMARNOCK:
PRINTED BY JOHN WILSON,

M,DCC,LXXXVI.

handsome—although young collectors must not think that the prices asked by dealers very closely approximate the prices dealers are willing to pay to young collectors. That naïve notion has given many amateurs an evil opinion of dealers that some of them do not deserve. In the case of Stephen Crane's *Maggie*, however, one would be justified in holding out for a fair reward, for the book is unquestionably hard to find. It was never really published; it was printed for the author—a nice distinction. It is a fairly large octavo, in yellow wrappers, and Mr. Crane's name does not appear upon the title-page. Instead, there appears the name of one Johnston Smith; but Johnston Smith was merely Stephen Crane masquerading until such time as he should have read the reviews. A copy has sold recently for as much as one hundred dollars, which is only a fraction of what it will bring some later day.

The cases of Messrs. Milne and Wilder are rather extraordinary. The prices of the first editions of their most famous volumes literally rocketed within a few weeks of the dates of publication, and the same is true of the first edition of *The King's Henchman*, Miss Millay's libretto for a grand opera.

Certainly one of the rarest items in modern literature is that known as *The Dance of Death* and attributed to William Herman; for the author of the

work—in collaboration with another man—was none other than Ambrose Bierce, whose reputation is now on its way to the heights. It was published in 1877—a magnificent tirade directed against the immorality of the waltz—and was actually a hoax perpetrated by Bierce and Thomas A. Harcourt. But the valuable edition is the *right* edition, in the terminology of the collector, which upon its title-page, in addition to the title and author, contains only the words "Author's Copy." All others are reprints, and though they are scarce and desirable, the *right* copy is the roc of the species. It fetches today something less than fifty dollars, but in a few years it will take its place as one of the commanding rarities of our time.

As for Joseph Hergesheimer, his early volumes already are climbing toward enviable figures, and there is no limit to their possibilities. I suppose that it was the suppression of *Jurgen* that made James Branch Cabell for the collectors, quite as much as, in a large degree, it was the suppression of *Jurgen* that made Mr. Cabell for the booksellers and the critics. Whatever may have been the critical and sales results, that resounding episode was a trumpet blast to collectors. They hunted frantically for first editions of the suppressed novel—which had reached a third impression before the ax fell—and snapped up the earlier works with great gusto, although previ-

ously many of the early volumes had been considered notable chiefly for the illustrations of Howard Pyle. Prices mounted steadily, and today few esteemed writers bring higher figures in their first appearances than Mr. Cabell. Scarcest of all is his first novel, *The Eagle's Shadow*, first published as a serial, and the more devoted of this writer's admirers seek diligently for the old magazine issues containing the chapters of that story. For the book and for the magazine numbers dealers ask surprising prices.

Of contemporary writers who are not Americans, a number in recent years have been outstandingly popular with collectors, and their first edition prices have soared in some instances to almost incredible figures. Stevenson is the great survival of the eighties; his prices have scarcely wavered since they began to rise, years ago. At the moment, two who seem to stand head and shoulders above their fellows, in their popularity with collectors, are Barrie and Bernard Shaw, but it was only yesterday that the favored pair were Joseph Conrad and George Moore. Impressive disputes are conducted in serious bibliographical journals as to the rightness of their editions: whether New York antedated London in a given instance, or publication was simultaneous in those cities, and which variation of several bindings was the authentic first. All four of the men have benefited hugely by

the enthusiasm of collectors, and at least two of them have been personally party to the publication at high prices, in very limited editions, of books especially designed for the collecting fraternity.

Now the easiest way to obtain such books as one cares to collect is to purchase them from the better dealers; but this method is likely to run into alarming figures. That is the millionaire's way. He tells his agent what interests him, or his agent tells him what ought to interest him, and the millionaire gives a blanket order that is passed along to the rare-book dealer. The dealer advertises widely, England is ransacked, and in time the desired items are procured and turned over to the millionaire for a pretty penny. The dealer, quite properly, gets for them every nickel that they are worth, and perhaps more. He is entitled to his price.

I cannot afford to collect that way, and I am sure no other small collector can afford it. So that the more difficult way, in a sense, becomes the small collector's way, and he soon comes to realize that it is by all odds the happiest way. He digs around in the smaller shops, in the shilling barrows, in the ten-cent boxes, and resurrects the little mistakes and ignorances of the small dealer. With no little taste and acumen, he sniffs the excellence of a newcomer in letters, and purchases his work as it comes from

the press, before the verdict of time and survival has been handed down. He even profits by the little mistakes and ignorances of the larger dealer, who is far, indeed, from infallible. And in time he brings together, either for sentiment or for sale, a very good and representative collection of choice works that have cost him probably less than a tenth of what they are actually worth. If he cares to sell them he may reap a handsome profit on his investment; if he does not care to sell he may—and does—sit back and boast of the items in his collection that So-and-So, the wealthy collector, with all his money could not buy.

Yes, that is quite the happiest way of all to quest for the diamond—in the dust heap. Frequent all the shops, the greater as well as the lesser, and search out the rarities that the dealers have overlooked, or the prospective rarities that the dealers do not yet recognize. They are always to be found, for there never yet has been a dealer who knew everything there was to be known about rare volumes. Somewhere in the heaps and tons of old books that line the walls of bookshops or gather dust in the outdoor bins, there are choice and desirable items of charm and of value. The shrewd collector will recognize and acquire them when he sees them. Every new search is a voyage to the Indies, a quest for buried treasure, a journey to

the end of the rainbow; and whether or not at the end there shall be turned up a pot of gold or merely a delightful volume, there are always wonders along the way.

If a collector's taste be right he cannot go far wrong in his selections. Sooner or later his judgments will be justified. In 1914, with no more capital than is usually to be found in the pockets of a newspaper-man, I began to collect the editions of a British writer whose work pleased my fancy, but whose name was quite unknown. Over the next ten years I gathered his books and his pamphlets, wherever I found them, at a cost so small that never once was I obliged to forego—as tradition seems always to demand—a single luncheon to possess a book. At the end of my decade of questing, having tired somewhat of that specialty and being just as diligently engaged with the works of another unknown, I sold my entire collection of the first man, *en bloc*, to a wealthy collector, and pocketed a check for two thousand dollars. There was no fraud, no gouging in the deal. The collection was worth every penny of what I received, and today it is worth more. Yet its actual cost to me had been, I suppose, something less than three hundred dollars, and that distributed over a period of ten years.

I am at present collecting just as earnestly the

works of several other men who are as certain of fame as was the man I found in 1914, and whose first editions in another five years will bring astonishing prices. I am not collecting for the market; I am collecting for my own happiness. But it is a comforting thought that I am building upon a solid foundation. The sale value will be there when, and if, I ever care to sell. I must, however, decline to name the men I have in mind, for there are indications that the rise is beginning, and I have no desire for competition until my own collections are complete.

There is no shame to be taken, however, in speculating with books, and a very decent income may be achieved in that field. With a sufficient knowledge of the needs of the better dealers, an earnest and energetic young man—or, for that matter, young woman —may earn in his spare time anywhere from fifty to a hundred dollars a week. One of the best-known dealers in America recently told me that he paid over the latter sum, once a week on an average, to a youth who spends his entire leisure canvassing the smaller bookshops, picking up the rare and curious volumes that he has learned to know the dealer can use. He is able to buy them for a fraction of their worth, and, as he knows what ultimately will be charged for them, is able to sell them for about half of that final figure and reap an excellent harvest. It is a pleasant and an

honest profession, and a cultured one. In all parts of the world it is a popular one. In England, France and America, along Charing Cross Road, along the Seine embankment, and in lower Fourth Avenue, I have met young men who devote all or part of their time to it; and, where intelligence directed the search, they have prospered.

Queer indeed are the items that come to light out of box and barrow, long lost and perhaps forgotten even by their authors; early pamphlets, printed at the authors' expense, unimportant volumes with great names signed to the introductory prefaces, advertising brochures done by celebrities in their cheese-and-ale days, circulars, playbills, programs, and what not! It is almost wicked to turn them up, but the implacable collector must possess every line printed by the man he has chosen to collect. Perhaps some day a law will be passed against the ghoulishness of it all; in the meantime it is often these very trifles and embarrassments that bring the largest prices in the market.

But the prime requisites for collecting are a flair for books and a genuine love of the game. Lacking these, let no one attempt the gentle art of book collecting, whatever its rewards.

THE RATIONALE OF BOOK COLLECTING

THE RATIONALE OF BOOK COLLECTING

"WHY do you collect things?" asked my friend the the doctor.

I told him all about it, at considerable length and with some enthusiasm. I explained to him the rationale of collecting.

He looked at me oddly and said, "You're queer, you know." An instant later he handed me his cigarette case, as if to add, "But I like you, anyway."

I pulled a long face and retorted, "If we were honest with ourselves, shouldn't we all have to confess that many of our actions would not stand a psychopathic test?"

He laughed. "Sure," he admitted good-humoredly. "But—it's funny!"

"I believe myself to be one of the most rational of men," I asserted. "Why should it be assumed that I am possessed of some sort of mania because I have this passion for collecting things?"

"Many an inmate of the state institution is carefully watched because he is similarly afflicted," smiled the doctor.

I strolled over to his bookcase and ran my eye over a list of titles; then I plucked a volume from the shelf.

"What will you take for this book?" I asked.

"I'll give it to you, if you want it," he replied. "I can get another copy if I need it."

"Very well," I said; "I'll sell this tomorrow for ten dollars and buy you another copy for two. Will that satisfy you?"

"What?" he cried; and joined me with some alacrity. "What's the—what do you—what is it, anyway?"

"It's a first edition," I told him, "and I can get ten dollars for it. The copy I shall get you will be a fifth edition, and I can buy it new for a fifth of what I receive for this one."

My friend the doctor will never be a really good collector; he doesn't care enough about books as books; but he has become very garrulous about first editions, and I am sure that he thinks of himself as a book collector.

It is possible that the most misunderstood man upon earth is the collector of books; that is to say, the collector of books with respect to title-pages and editions, dates and associations. Even earnest men of letters, students and scholars whose lives are lived among volumes old and new, often regard him with

QUEEN MAB;

A

PHILOSOPHICAL POEM:

WITH NOTES.

BY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

ECRASEZ L'INFAME!
Correspondance de Voltaire.

Avia Pieridum peragro loca, nullius ante
Trita solo; juvat integros accedere fonteis;
Atque haurire: juratque novos decerpere flores.
* * * * * *
Unde prius nulli velarint tempora musæ:
Primum quod magnis doceo de rebus; et arctis
Religionum animos nodis exsolvere pergo.
Lucret. lib. iv.

Δὸς πᾶ ϛῶ, καὶ κοσμον κινησω.
Archimedes.

LONDON:

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23, Chapel Street, Grosvenor Square.

1813.

emotions ranging between amusement and suspicion. Charitably inclined friends, who take their own pleasure from the motion pictures and the radio, think of his hobby as a mild form of mental weakness, which may be overlooked if he plays a decent hand at bridge and is not averse to a drink of illicit whisky. Tradition has it that he is a man who, by reason of a sentimental vanity, spends his all upon old volumes and allows his house to decay and his family to starve. He is caricatured as wrapped in a huge overcoat with cavernous pockets, in whose depths and under whose folds he sneaks his dubious treasures past a lynx-eyed wife, to hide them upon a remote shelf until such time as it is safe to resurrect and fondle them in privacy. For all of which, it is tacitly admitted that he is a picturesque figure in the human spectacle, and many books and many essays have been written around him; yea, even poems.

What is to be said in behalf of this usually mild-manner gentleman who proverbially spends so much of his time exploring the dusty shelves of dingy bookshops, and devotes his evenings to looking over the latest consignment of catalogues from London and New York? So much that one is almost afraid to begin. So much that one will not know where to make an end.

The fact is, book collecting in its finest and high-

est aspect *is* sentimental. If that is an admission that invalidates the argument to follow, it cannot be helped. But there are other aspects. Perhaps one had better say at once, as in the doctor's case, that book collecting is profitable. Now everybody is interested, and it is less difficult to proceed.

What establishes collectors' values? Why is one man collected while another is ignored? Is it a charming style that dictates the selection? A meaty content? A whisper of scandal in the life of the collected? Or is the phenomenon purely arbitrary? I have little doubt that all the answers suggested by the questions are the right ones in certain instances.

An agreeable personality reflected in a book of whatever nature is beyond question a potent factor in the building of a writer's popularity with the collecting fraternity. So also is a vigorous realism and a grotesque whimsicality; and it will scarcely be denied that a suppressed chapter in the life of an author lends a sinister glamour to his work. It is equally certain that, very often indeed, the furor of an individual or a group of individuals for the written words of other individuals is arbitrary in the extreme, if not, from the viewpoint of the critical intellect, altogether absurd.

Yet in every case the collector will advance you reasons—and very good ones they will be—for his

choice. It is, you see, entirely a matter of taste, a changing and almost inexplicable standard; and in the end it comes squarely to this: the collector collects whom he pleases or what he pleases, for what reasons he pleases, and his reasons—whatever they may be—are sufficient. That is to say, sentimentally speaking, the important thing is the collecting, and the pleasure and instruction to be derived therefrom, if it be only the collecting of varicolored shoe buttons.

I once heard of a man whose friends tolerantly regarded him as a little off, who throughout a long lifetime declined to allow anyone to enter his bedroom. He always kept the door locked, and it was supposed that he concealed something of considerable value under his bed or in his closet. After his death his treasure was found to consist of about fifty old hats that he had purchased at auction.

"He was undoubtedly mad," said the friend of mine who told me the story; "but what will my executors say, *post mortem*, when they come upon my twenty-five distinct and separate editions of *Leaves of Grass*, since any one of them can be proved to contain all of the poetry that Whitman wrote?

"God help me," he added with a smile; "it is still my ambition to possess every published edition of the masterpiece, and I have yet a long way to travel."

He is one of the sanest and happiest men I have ever met, albeit he is far from wealthy. I have no doubt that his friend was happy with his old hats. And I suspect that what both these gentlemen were collecting was happiness. If it is to be found in old hats and old books, then it is not so elusive a thing as many philosophers would have us believe.

"But why first editions?" asks the outsider.

Unless one say at once, "Because first editions are profitable," that is a question almost unexplainable in words to the sort of person who will ask the question. Either one understands at once, without explanation, or one doesn't. To the collector who does not collect for profit, the matter is clear enough, and no explanation is necessary—although it has to do with this thing of sentiment and happiness. Still, a fuller explanation may be attempted. For one thing, a first edition certainly is the edition nearest the heart of an author, the edition upon which his hopes were laid and his ambitions builded; and particularly is this true when the book in question happens to be an author's first publication. Imagine with what flutterings of the auctorial heart, with what ecstatic apprehension, he handled his own copy of the book that day it came to him from the publisher! Is not something of this spirit communicated to the collector who loves this writer and his work? Or does that explana-

tion partake too much of sorcery? Here is the original creation, just as it came first from the presses, with all its strangenesses and wonder for its original readers, with all its uncorrected errors and inaccuracies to mark it as the curiosity it is. And, of course, with all those mystic values that accrue and attach to the thing that is rare and hard to find. That is all very sentimental, but it is also very practical, as will appear in due course.

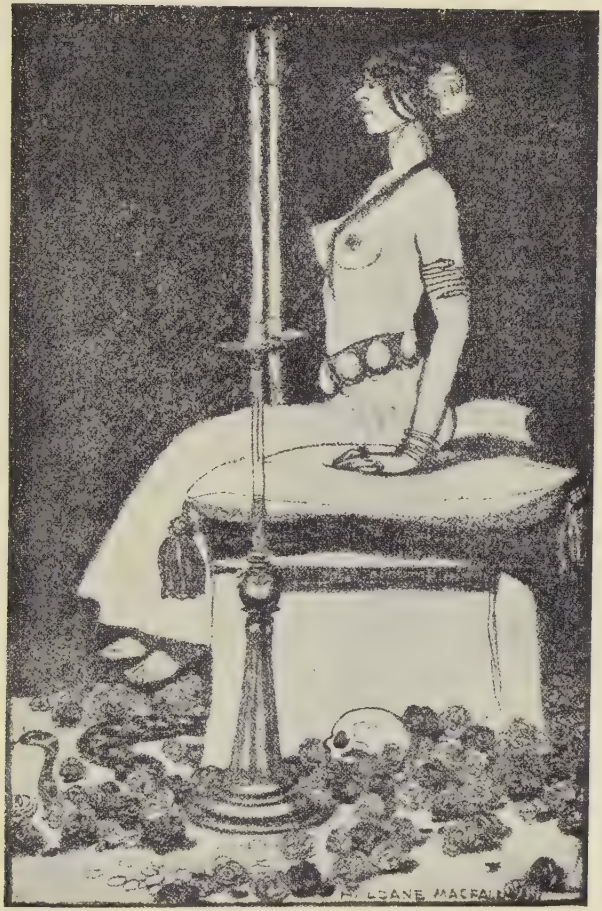
Often a first edition is quite the *best* edition. Its typography may be handsomer, blacker, clearer than that of subsequent printings. Between printings many things may occur. Type is easily broken, plates become worn. On the covers, gold may give way to enamel, buckram to something with at least the appearance of bedticking. Ornaments may be removed. The too-careful author, ever restless, ever revising, may sacrifice whole chapters as originally written, without benefit to his creation. Sentences, paragraphs, entire pages may be suppressed by public opinion or the public prosecutor. Only the publisher, the author and the collector know what happens between edition and edition. And, of course, a first edition may be the only edition; but that is a painful consideration, and has little bearing upon our argument. Yet it must not be supposed that because a volume has failed to pass out of its first printing it

is unworthy the attention of the collector. Nor is it to be assumed that attractiveness of format alone will make a volume desirable; if it would, how many tons of rubbish, privately printed and otherwise, would be preserved while Mark Twain's earlier writings were finding their way to the ash barrel. And certainly the mere fact of suppression will not make a volume desirable; there must be other considerations; nor will misprints, nor false eulogy, nor errors in pagination add to its value.

In a sentence, then: the esteem of the serious collector is not won by the circumstance of accident or trickery in the manufacture of a book, but by the book's intrinsic fineness, by those values that make for permanence in literature. It is my considered opinion that, in no small degree, the fate of an author's work, with reference to its survival, is in the hands of the collectors; in the end, often, that work will stand or fall according as they have found it worthy or unworthy its inch of space.

Greater than the professional critics are the unprofessional collectors, and of more importance to the art of literature.

For instance, there have been reprinted in recent years three works of fiction—*The Wooings of Jezebel Pettyfer* by Haldane Macfall, *Saïd the Fisherman* by Marmaduke Pickthall, and *The Twi-*


H. LOANE MACFARLANE

light of the Gods by Richard Garnett. All had been out of print for many years, all were unknown to the larger public, yet all had persisted and lived in spite of the general apathy, and for some time all had been bringing—in their first appearances—flattering figures. Definitely, the collectors, the book tasters, the appreciators were responsible for the survival of these works and for their reprinting long after the more popular volumes of their day had passed into deserved oblivion. And today the first editions of those titles are more widely sought than ever, and bring more commanding prices in the market. These are but three of a long list of titles that I might furnish; I mention them because they have an immediate significance. Their re-publication was forced by the growing demand for their first editions by collectors, which in turn led to a wider interest in them on the part of readers who were not collectors.

But, again to caution the novice for whom, at the moment, I am writing, it is not only the good books that have been ignored in their day that are desirable. Not all fine works are overlooked or misunderstood in their time, even by the critics. A far greater number have been hailed with enthusiasm, and have passed rapidly into edition after edition. The ignored books have been the curious books, the precious books, the fantastic books, the mystic books—in a

word, the *different* books that have refused to classify or conform. Yes, and the bitter books that have dared to say that life at best is a dubious enterprise.

These and many others, the collectors have taken to their hearts and have preserved in their first editions. By their enthusiasms they have taught generations of antiquarian booksellers what to buy and what to sell. This is not at all to say that the dealers themselves are of necessity lacking in that taste that I have attributed to the collectors. Many of them have as much as the best of their clientele; many of them have been themselves collectors, and a few are still collectors. These are the dealers to know and to cultivate, the dealers whose catalogues are to be preserved and enjoyed. That hordes of booksellers are, however, merely sellers of books as they might be sellers of sleeve bands or watercress, is equally beyond dispute. Those are the men to pilfer without remorse; that is, they are the dealers from whom to purchase as cheaply as one can that which one wants, without feeling that anyone has been in any way defrauded.

I am aware that I have not as yet answered in full the outsider's question. If he is anything of a psychologist, although probably he is not, he will have his own private ideas on the subject. I shall be entirely honest with him. There *is* an element of vanity in

the situation, a rather large element. There is something pleasantly exclusive, is there not, in possessing a work which, if it is not already rare and difficult to come by, sooner or later will exist in diminishing quantity upon the market? That is a justification of collecting that involves the psychology of rarity, and is at bottom probably the sheerest vanity; but it is a characteristic of mankind to find happiness in the possession of something that his neighbor does not have, if it be only the memory of a trip to Mexico or a six-cylinder roadster. I think the collector whose quarry is dollars is no happier than the one who runs after books. If anything, he is less happy; but that is another argument. It is, however, in this consideration of rarity, I think, that we approach the heart of the mystery. Man wants what he cannot have, or what is difficult to procure, or what he must wade through the blood of other men to get. So with collectors. I am prepared to admit that, quite as much as any single feature of the urge to collect, the circumstance of rarity attracts the collector. Possibly it is the most attractive feature of the profession of collecting. But—the objects sought, however rare, should be worthy of the search. With the doughty seeker after shoe buttons, however joyous the pastime, the world can have less patience than with the enthusiast whose passion is Elzevirs.

Yet in both cases, it is probably true that the chase is largely the thing. A long pursuit, fraught with those quietly exciting adventures that befall the collector, is exhilarating and commendable if it be only an Argentine consular report that lies at the rainbow's end. Ah, the scheming, and the writing around, and the reading and checking of catalogues, and the searching of obscure shops, and the waiting, and the heartache, and the happiness! The old question as to the relative merits of pursuit and possession opens out of the argument, and need not be considered, since in this field one pursuit ends only to mark the beginning of another. It is the game without an end, the playing of which never tires.

Suppose you are looking for a single volume to complete a set of somebody's first editions. Any day it may drift into the bookshop with a consignment of oddments from some scattered library. Any day it may turn up in some obscure heap where it has been hidden all the time that you have been searching for it. Any day its title may confront you in a little stall, hitherto unknown, marked at a ridiculous price that even you can pay. And it will be like finding the Kohinoor. What will you do that day? Will you pluck it from its shroud of dust, or from its slim forgotten niche, and rush to the dealer, crying, "Eureka! I have found it! It is worth forty dollars! I

have looked for it for years!" Indeed, I hope you will not. I hope that you will instantly pick up some two or three other things that are not worth a penny to a paper dealer, and casually say that you will take the lot if the price is right, or if the dealer will throw in a lead pencil. Something like that. It is not always wise to take a dealer into one's confidence. I have lost some excellent finds that way. And, too, there may be another copy, some day, in that very shop. Why advertise its value at the expense of your own pocket? *The Open Boat* by Stephen Crane in its first edition is a scarce and desirable little volume. I have had three copies of it, in as many years, and every one of them has turned up in the same shop, in almost the same spot. It has been almost uncanny. I have paid less than a dollar a copy for each. I have no explanation to offer for this phenomenon; I merely record the fact.

And then, suppose the volume that you are seeking does not come to light, that it never turns up, and that to the end of life your collection remains without it? You must be satisfied with the answer: it does not greatly matter. Think of the fun you have had! Besides which, no one ever is looking for only one book. You, I hope, will be looking for a dozen, for a hundred. Some of them will appear. The browsing, well-informed collector, with taste and intelligence,

has no notion as a rule just what he is looking for until he finds it; but when it turns up he is prepared to recognize it. However, it does not pay to be aimless unless one is a seasoned collector.

Some time back, I spoke of the joy of an author who handles for the first time his own first editions. Let us suppose the collector's copy of a book in question to be one of those actual volumes—the identical copy fondled by its author years before—perhaps with his name on its flyleaf, his notes and emendations in its margins. There were a book to own! This reflection, to be sure, takes us somewhat away from the immediate subject and into the realm of association copies—that is, books with a distinguished personal association, verified by some inscription or legend. Association copies are among the collector's greatest treasures; and it is a fact, I believe, that most genuine association copies are first editions.

The reason for that is not far to seek. In his initial transports, the author, more than generous in the triumph of his advance copies, and moved to strange emotions by the veritable appearance of his dreams in the permanence of print, joyously inscribes all but two to his friends, his relatives and his literary gods. Naturally, the second edition, if he is so fortunate as to achieve a second edition, finds him somewhat less moved; his emotions are less rhapsodically mu-

nificent. The more sordid consideration of soaring sales intrudes upon his creational intoxication, and instead of books, letters go forth to his friends, affecting a carefully casual interest in the publisher's reports. But with each new volume the inscriptive quill appears; he never quite lays it away. Particularly is this true of the unsuccessful writer, who, poor chap, frequently must give away more books than ever are sold. And what a sinful joy the collector knows who, possessed of an inscribed copy of a poet's brochure, opens a morning newspaper to read that the unfortunate poet has fired his garret and perished valiantly, surrounded by the melancholy remainder of his edition!

Perhaps that is too satirical; but the fact is that association copies are quite the most delightful and desirable items in a collector's library. Sentiment again, no doubt; or vanity, or what you will. Still, it is a pleasant thing to own the copy of Shakespeare's works, let us say, that was read and used and marked by Walter Pater, and that carries his identifying signature upon its fly. That volume is in my own library, and it gives me great happiness to see and touch it. Sometimes I read in it. I have no notion what it may be worth. Certainly it cost me very little. But I have no idea of selling it. I will trade it,

however, for the copy of *Treasure Island* that Stevenson gave to his wife.

This is all very sentimental, indeed, is it not? Let us proceed, then, to the final answer to the outsider's question. I believe I have hinted at it a number of times.

Book collecting is profitable. First editions are a profitable investment. They may be sold for money. Thus, if your happiness is in collecting dollars, you may sell your books for dollars; and if my happiness is in collecting books, I may spend my dollars for books. The arrangement is entirely fair. My dollars for your books; your books for my dollars. Or, if you like, and it is the happiest arrangement of all, our passions may be combined, and we may have both books and dollars by an intelligent study of the rules of the game.

Meantime, I suggest, as I have already suggested, that when we are collecting books, we are collecting happiness; and if that be not the absolute quested by us all, I do not know what is.

THE A B C OF FIRST EDITIONS

THE ABC OF FIRST EDITIONS

"The prime requisites for collecting are a flair for books and a genuine love of the game. Lacking these, let no one attempt the gentle art of book collecting, whatever its rewards."

I quote these dicta from my second chapter, because I believe them to be important. They should stand, I think, at the beginning and at the end of any paper designed to instruct the novice. It is my firm conviction that the unbookish individual who turns his attention to book collecting solely for profit is letting himself in for a discouraging probation period. In time, no doubt, he may learn enough about values, at least extrinsic values, to justify his undertaking; but, lacking the instinctive taste of the born collector, he is likely for some years to have a disappointing time of it. Encouraged by the success of others, he may rashly assume that all first editions are valuable, that all volumes carrying inscriptions by their authors are readily to be converted into cash, that all books printed before the year 1850 are desiderata by reason of their age, and that coffee stains and missing leaves somehow add stature to a volume's importance.

Frankly, I have little sympathy for this individual, and usually it is with malicious enjoyment that I listen to his tale of woe. He is disliked equally by dealers and collectors, and he reflects little credit upon a profession that he attempts to adorn. In particular is this true of the wide-eared type of shrewd young man—and I have known some dozens of him —who loiters in the shabbier bookshops to listen in on the talk that occurs between collectors. He annoys everybody by the mere fact of his existence. I say I have known dozens of him, and I have no doubt that he exists in hundreds. I know exactly what his game is. It is to eavesdrop until he has learned what writers' books are at the moment being sought by the up-to-date collectors, and then to hurry away in search of those books before they can be discovered by the men whose conversation has furnished him his information. Often he finds them, but he is no more entitled to his triumph than is the schoolboy who copies his neighbor's answers during an examination. He is an insufferable nuisance; but I am admitting that he can and does learn enough, at length, occasionally to turn for himself a very pretty penny.

His tale of woe, for the most part, is directed against the wiser collectors who turn their backs upon him, and against the dealers who, during the period of his probation, will not buy the worthless volumes

No. 1 of 1886.
To
all Heads of Depa
and all Anglo-Indians
Rudyard Kipling ASSISTANT
Department of Public Journalism.
Lahore District
DEPARTMENTAL DITTIES
AND OTHER VERSES
LAHORE
CIVIL AND MILITARY GAZETTE

he offers for sale, who in later years will not pay the exaggerated prices he believes he should receive for his more authentic finds. That frequently he is fleeced by the dealers is beyond question, but he invites it by his crudeness and by his offensive combination of arrogance and servility.

There are other objectionable types in the field, but there is no need to dwell upon them. Such advice as I have to offer is not for them, but for the honest collector to whom books are something more than commodities, to be picked up like old iron and sold like old dental fillings. I should be sorry to be the means of inducing any person to become a collector or a speculator, merely to make money. And, indeed, only persons of some culture and intelligence may hope to be consistently successful, since the possibilities of profit depend so largely upon the tastes and inclinations of the collector.

Book collecting is a subject so enormous that it is literally true that a large library might be brought together of volumes solely concerned with that fascinating pursuit. Its subdivisions include practically every subject upon which books have been written—that is to say, there are collectors of books on surgery and there are collectors of books on tobacco and there are collectors of books on American history, on chess, on Gothic architecture, on Shakespeare, on printing,

on sorcery, on firearms, on bookplates and on languages. There are collectors of dictionaries and there are collectors of Bibles. There are collectors of books of certain periods, of rare bindings, of manuscript volumes and of old almanacs. The list is endless.

Whatever subject interests a man with a passion for collecting, that subject he collects in all its printed manifestations. There are, however, a number of subjects of outstanding appeal, and it is the books upon those subjects that are in greatest demand. And as in all other enterprises involving an exchange of money, the law of supply and demand operates in the enterprise of buying and selling rare books. Great libraries, brought to the hammer at the death or bankruptcy of their compilers, have been dispersed for golden sums, and single volumes purchased at ridiculous figures have netted extraordinary profits. To be sure, the market fluctuates, but a really fine and desirable volume, of the right edition, always will be worth a number of times its purchase price upon the day of publication.

A primer of book collecting is not the place for a discussion of such items as incunabula—volumes printed before the year 1500—Elzevirs, Gutenberg Bibles, block books, or the quarto editions of Shakespeare. The public libraries contain whole volumes upon these subjects. At the moment, as a casual

glance at contemporaneous sales catalogues will prove, the market runs strongly to first editions, and in large part to modern first editions. And as it is these volumes that the beginning collector is most likely to encounter in his browsings, and to recognize when he encounters them, let the talk be for a time of first editions.

What is a first edition? Not the first appearance of a tale or novel in a magazine, surrounded by a miscellany of other oddments; that is referred to, technically, by the term I have just used—it is a *first appearance*. Granted that, in the last analysis, there can be only *one* first edition—a writer's first manuscript of a work—the ideas that produced it being intangible and difficult to collect for a museum —the first separate printing of story or stanza must arbitrarily assume the rank and the position. Somewhere there must be a beginning. What, then, is a first edition? Obviously it is the first printing of a book or pamphlet. Those volumes printed in the first run from the presses, perhaps 1000 in number, perhaps 50,000, are first editions. Later printings, as the sales justify them, are second editions and third editions, and so on; and these to a collector, except in unusual circumstances, are of no interest whatever. However, first editions are run off in 50,000 lots only when the popularity of an author is

wide; and it will be clear to everybody that a volume of which 50,000 copies were printed at a clip is less likely to become a rarity than a volume of which only 1000 copies were produced.

For instance, the publication not many years ago of a young author's first novel was not at all the literary event that publication of his latest novel has proved to be. Possibly 1000 copies of that first novel comprised its first edition, possibly 2000; but the first printing of the current opus was widely advertised as having been 60,000 copies. Yet despite the high superiority of the latest novel as measured beside the merit of that earlier performance, his first book always will command a higher figure in the rare-book mart. Let the class in book collecting answer why. Quite right! Because there are fewer of the one than of the other.

Out of the foregoing two other questions at once arise: how is a first edition to be told from a second or later edition, and what or whose first editions shall one collect? The second question is, perhaps the harder to answer. The collector with taste and discrimination will collect the writings of such authors as please that discriminating taste, without particularly caring whether they increase in their extrinsic values. If the matter of profit interests him, and he is not too modest, he will probably assume

that his taste is as good as that of the next fellow, and that it will in time be justified in dollars.

The collector whose interest lies largely with the dollars, and who is unsure of his own taste, will have to acquaint himself with the booksellers' catalogues and such annual volumes as *Book Prices Current*, thereby to acquaint himself with the tastes of others. The catalogues of the antiquarian booksellers are the ones that I am talking about; they are the textbooks that I had in mind when, in an earlier chapter, I wrote that any number could be acquired for the price of a dozen postal cards. The booksellers, be sure, are very happy to send them to all who are interested. Or the dubious, hesitating collector may snoop like the young man I mentioned in an earlier paragraph, although it is an unhappy and discouraging business. I strongly recommend the catalogue habit; and it is no national secret that there are published in America at least two excellent weekly journals exclusively devoted to the barter values of rare books.

Some hints as to the caliber of the writers who may be safely collected may be given, however. I turn to the first sale catalogue at hand, an attractively printed pamphlet advertising the wares of a New York dealer; one of a dozen or more similar brochures that come to me every week from many points of the compass. Arranged alphabetically

under the names of authors, and offered for sale at profitable advances over the published prices, I find a medley of titles of the works in prose and verse of some hundreds of esteemed moderns. The list begins with Anderson—Sherwood—and closes with Wilson —Woodrow. Between these admired gentlemen occur the names of James M. Barrie, Aubrey Beardsley, Max Beerbohm, Ambrose Bierce, Rupert Brooke, James Branch Cabell, Willa Cather, Samuel L. Clemens, Joseph Conrad, Stephen Crane, Walter de la Mare, Norman Douglas, Ernest Dowson, John Drinkwater, Lord Dunsany, Ronald Firbank, E. M. Forster, James Elroy Flecker, Robert Frost, Thomas Hardy, Joseph Hergesheimer, W. H. Hudson, Aldous Huxley, Henry James, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Amy Lowell, Arthur Machen, Katherine Mansfield, John Masefield, H. L. Mencken, Edna St. Vincent Millay, A. A. Milne, George Moore, Christopher Morley, George Jean Nathan, A. Edward Newton, Robert Nichols, Eugene O'Neill, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Edgar Saltus, George Santayana, George Bernard Shaw, James Stephens, Robert Louis Stevenson, Lytton Strachey, Arthur Symons, Carl Van Vechten, H. G. Wells, Oscar Wilde and, of course, Thornton Wilder.

These are only a few of the names set forth, and all their possessors may be called modern in spite of

the saddening reflection that some of them are dead. In other catalogues, I find evidence of a lively demand for the first editions of the works of such earlier writers as Poe and Hawthorne, Thoreau and Whitman; and of late there has been a general scramble for the first printings of the rediscovered and resurrected Herman Melville. Dickens and Thackeray have been devotedly collected for many years.

I am not saying, nor shall I say, that the works of all these writers will survive, and that in consequence their first editions will continue to increase in value. I am merely saying that at the moment I find these names outstanding in the catalogues of dealers whose business it is to supply the demands of collectors. That many will survive is beyond dispute, but it is not a literary critique that I am engaged upon. Yet I think it is significant that in a majority of instances the names I have listed are the names of poets and fictionists and essayists whose work is most highly regarded by the best practicing critics. That, too, is a clew to the novice's problem of what writers to collect. On the other hand, many collected authors are merely fads of the hour, as in my opinion are a number of those listed above; their first editions must be collected and marketed while the iron is hot, so to speak.

Of the dead it is possible to speak frankly; and so

it may be said that there can be no possible doubt as to the survival of such writers as Conrad and Stevenson, as Mark Twain and Henry James, as Ambrose Bierce and Stephen Crane. These men will always have their collectors, as, in a lesser degree, will Brooke and Flecker and Oscar Wilde. Why? In a word, because of the fineness, the perfection, the permanence of their work; because they are great artists, each in his line, and can hardly fail ever to lack appreciators in number.

The cases of Poe and Whitman have been proved, and perhaps the same can be said of Thoreau and Melville. They have survived years of critical upheavals, and it is reasonable to believe that they will continue to survive even the vagaries of this day. That there is ever likely to be anything resembling a violent revival of interest in, say, Fenimore Cooper or James Russell Lowell, I for one do not believe. They were important in their day, but they are not important in this; their writings, on the whole, make no continued and continuous appeal; their work lacks those values that make for permanence. Possibly I am wrong, but that is my opinion. None the less, there are collectors of the writings of Fenimore Cooper and of James Russell Lowell, and of many another writing man whom I might have mentioned in the same breath. They are not a numerous race, however.

Collect these forgotten heroes if you love them, by all means, but do not expect dealers to wax enthusiastic about your finds.

It will have been noted that many of the writers whose first editions have been offered for sale by that unnamed New York dealer were Englishmen. In this connection a word of caution is imperative. To be a proper first edition, except in unusual circumstances, an English author's book must be of the English edition, published in London or Cambridge or Oxford, or wherever the original publisher pitches his tent. A copy of that same volume, identical in all other respects, but wearing a title-page carrying the imprint of a New York or other American publisher, will not do at all. There are right copies and wrong copies of a first edition, and the copy I have just described would be a wrong one.

American imprints on first editions of English manufacture come about through importation of the original sheets, and suggest that the American publisher's faith in the sales possibilities of the books in question was insufficient to justify the expense of printing a wholly American edition. It is a little unsafe to make rules, for, as I have hinted, there are exceptional circumstances in which the first edition of a book by an English writer may carry a New York title-page; but a general rule that is safe in a

majority of instances is this: an author's nationality determines the birthplace of his first editions.

Let us have a look at some of the exceptions. Sometimes it can be shown that an Englishman's book was published in America some time before its publication in England. When the difference in time is great enough—a few days are unimportant—it is sufficient to make of the American item a genuine first edition; and the greater the difference in time, the more collectors will uphold the contention.

This state of affairs may come about in several ways. An American publisher, planning to publish on the same day as his English associate, through accident or delay in London may get his book onto the market first. Or an American publisher may come into possession of some forgotten or uncollected work by an English writer and bring it out on his own authority, without consulting the author or the author's executor. By uncollected work, I mean work that an author himself has not seen fit to collect from the files of the magazines of original publication, or work all clew to which has become lost upon the death of a writer.

Not a great many years ago, an American firm brought out a handsome volume of short stories by Rudyard Kipling, stories gathered by some enthusiast from old Indian files. It had not been the inten-

FANSHAWE,

A TALE.

"Wilt thou go on with me?"—SOUTHEY.

BOSTON:
MARSH & CAPEN, 362 WASHINGTON STREET.

PRESS OF PUTNAM AND HUNT.
1828.

tion of Mr. Kipling to reprint those earlier tales, but the enterprise of the American publisher forced him, as he said, to issue an authorized edition through his regular publishers. Yet that first American printing of *Abaft the Funnel* is definitely and for all time the *right* first edition of that title for the collectors, whatever Mr. Kipling and his authorized publishers may think of the ethics of the volume's first sponsors. The morality of that original publication may be brought into question, but the fact remains undisputed that the pirated edition, so-called, did appear first.

Finally, there is nothing to prevent an English writer from allowing an American publisher to issue his work in advance of a London publication, unless it be an ironclad contract covering all his work, written and yet to be written. Sometimes, then, an American edition is the first edition by permission and consent, although this is a practice usually followed in the case of a limited edition, and is an enterprise carried out with the great body of American collectors shrewdly in mind.

There are other exceptions to the rule, but these three are, I think, the outstanding ones—that is, American publication by accident, by piracy and by permission. Only a diligent reading of catalogues published by dealers whose business it is to know, will

post the beginner as to the rightness and wrongness of many first editions. In general, however, when an American volume is dated a full year before its English twin, it is likely to be a genuine first edition. Even so, there are collectors who will have none but English editions of an Englishman and American editions of an American.

There is another curious feature to the international situation. Occasionally an author expatriates himself, and when this happens, what is to be said about his first editions? They are issued simultaneously, let us say, in London and New York. Which is the *right* first? To illustrate by example, Henry James, an American, went to England and lived there much of his life. His books appeared for the most part, simultaneously, or practically so, in England and America. Some years later, Mr. Richard Le Gallienne, an Englishman, came to America to live—he still lives here—and his books appear simultaneously, I believe, in America and England.

Both these writers have enthusiastic followings. What is to be done about their first editions? Shall they follow the flag, or the expatriated authors? It is a very neat problem, and each collector must solve it to his own satisfaction. I believe that a majority of collectors favor the flag solution, where there is no considerable difference in the actual time of publica-

tion; that is, they collect the American first editions of Henry James and the English first editions of Mr. Le Gallienne.

Since a line must be drawn somewhere in this matter of first editions, it seems a sane and reasonable solution of the difficulty. For the collector whom it fails to satisfy, there is only one alternative—he must collect both the English and the American editions, and it is an expensive business. English dealers, I am sorry to say, are sometimes none too careful, in describing volumes offered for sale in their catalogues, to distinguish between English and American first editions of any writers. Nine times in twelve, a volume described as a first edition is an English first edition, whether or not an American first edition happens to have preceded it chronologically. Nor are English bibliographers very keen about admitting the existence of American first editions on grounds of either piracy or priority. The careful collector, when he is himself well posted, will learn how to watch his step.

It is now possible to go back to the question: how may a first edition be identified? At my elbow I find a copy of Miss Millay's *Ballad of the Harp-Weaver*. On the verso of the title-page it is explicitly marked *First Edition*. There is no difficulty about that volume, but not all volumes are so marked. It is only

within recent years that many books definitely have been tagged first editions by their publishers, and not all publishers do it even now. I am not at liberty to betray such private identifying marks and symbols as I know to be used by publishers to denote first printings, but it is a fact that most publishers use such markers. Sometimes the symbol is a letter, sometimes a figure, and again it may be a monogram or colophon.

One great book house removes the date from a title-page after the first edition has been run, another removes a small ornament from the title verso. In our immediate day, it is less difficult to be sure of a first edition that formerly, because a majority of the current crop of publishers is careful to list all printings subsequent to the first, under the copyright notice. Even to the advanced student, identification is sometimes a puzzling business; in a particularly bewildering case, I suppose only the printer of the book could testify under oath. The better dealers are well posted men, but they are not and cannot be infallible. I have seen copies of the most obvious reprints offered for sale as first editions, in all honesty, by competent booksellers of wide fame.

The common rule is to note the date upon a title-page, then to compare it with the date of copyright upon the reverse of the title. When they are identical,

says the young collector, full of knowledge, the book is a first edition. It is not a safe rule at all. The book may be a first edition, and it may not. Suppose several editions to have been printed in the same year, and the publisher to have neglected to list his later printings; in that case, the young collector's rule would not be worth much to him. The second edition of Mr. Cabell's celebrated *Jurgen* so closely resembles the first, in all particulars, that it is to be determined only by the weight of the paper upon which it is printed; that is to say, the first edition, printed upon lighter paper, is a fraction of an inch less bulky than the second. Also there are publishers who do not date their title-pages at all; many London publishers are notoriously thoughtless in this particular. On the verso of their title-pages they may print, "Published February, 1903," or something of the sort, and that may be one's sole clew to the fact that one holds in one's hand an indubitable first edition.

To the beginner, such a line means nothing at all. Later he would discover that, in all probability, the second edition would contain an additional line: "Reprinted August, 1903." Sometimes there is no clew whatever, and a publisher himself—some years after the publication of a book—cannot say with certainty which is a first and which is not. Frankly, my dear

beginner, unless a volume be explicitly marked *First Edition* there is no way in which you may be utterly sure. The dealers, for the most part, know—I am still talking about the better dealers—because it is their business to know. They make inquiry, as do the better collectors, as to the signs and portents by which publishers identify their first-born. To begin with, you must take their word for it. In time, you will conduct your own inquiries, and your deductive faculties will become sharpened to the point where you will be able to check this against that. If you are the right sort, you will develop a sort of instinct for first editions. Until such time, you must diligently read the catalogues of those men who are wiser than yourself, and somewhat less prone to error.

But one of the delights of collecting is this very matter of identification. I know a collector who spends hours with a reading glass, searching for minute evidences of an internal nature, where direct evidence as to an edition is lacking. To him, blurred or broken type, bad alignment, transposed sentences and such queer phenomena are eloquent. He is as clever a detective in his own field as Dr. John Thorndyke in the medico-legal world. For example, you may observe in a catalogue the descriptive line, "First issue of the first edition."

Now what is a first issue of a first edition? It may

be one of the first few hundred copies run off the press, and differ from the later copies in some odd respect, a circumstance that would give it a higher market value than the later copies of the edition. Perhaps while the volume was printing an error was caught and corrected, a misprint, a dropped sentence, a broken type face. Perhaps a change of binding was decided upon, and the completed volumes, after the first few hundred, were turned out in somewhat different raiment. Perhaps the annoying author decided to rewrite a line or a pararaph, or to remove a libel, or to insert his silly portrait. Heaven knows what may have happened to bring about a difference between the first batch of books run from the presses and the later output of that same edition.

My friend is one of the fellows who discover these things. He isn't paid to do it; he is not employed by any publisher or printer or bookseller. He is a collector, and a good one. He does it because he likes to, because it is his way of finding happiness and of justifying his high standing as a collector. So it goes. In time, all these curious errors and changes are discovered by my friend, or by someone of his kind, and become a matter of record; whereupon, because they are earlier and scarcer, those queer first issues become more desirable than later issues. Thus the first issue of the first edition of Mr. Cabell's first book,

The Eagle's Shadow, commands a higher figure than the second issue. The only difference is on the dedication page, which in the first issue contains a set of initials, and in the second the name of the dedicatee in full. Or is it the other way 'round?

I suspect that to the outsider this all sounds a bit mad, and the discovery by the beginning collector that there may be divisions even of first editions is likely to appall him with a sense of the enormity of the task he has undertaken. But it is really excellent fun, and if one genuinely loves books and the pursuit of books, the business of learning the finer points of the game is not irksome. One learns as one goes along, and the information is painlessly acquired.

Further to dismay the beginner, it may be revealed that a second or a fifth or a twelfth edition of a book may also be a first, in a sense, when it contains additional matter of any importance. I think I have hinted at this before. Thus if a writer add a new preface or introduction to a late edition of a book, the book is a first edition for that new matter, and has some small standing of its own. To the eleventh edition of *Memoirs of My Dead Life*, I think it was, Mr. George Moore added an entirely new and important chapter, not contained in any previous volume or edition; and if the eleventh edition has no excessive sales value, it is at least a better buy and a

better sell than the many other editions that have no such interesting feature to set them apart. But the case of Mr. George Moore is a case by itself, about which a large volume might be written. He is constantly rewriting, revising, adding to and subtracting from his books, and almost every year sees a new and changed edition upon the market. He will ultimately drive collectors to madness if he is permitted to continue.

A puzzling consideration to the beginner, I find, is the status of limited editions when they are issued at the same time as the regular or market edition of a book. The limited edition, often numbered and signed by the author, is usually published on better paper, with wider margins, in handsomer covers and at a higher figure. The answer to that problem is easy. Both the limited and the market editions are first editions, one equally with the other, when publication is simultaneous. The limited edition is more desirable, because it is a finer book, physically speaking, but its smaller brother is no less authentic a first. Indeed, the better bibliographers, in describing such twins, describe first the market edition, then add, "There was also printed of this edition 150 copies on large paper," or words of similar purport.

Sometimes, however, a publisher will issue a limited edition in advance of the market edition, in which

case the former must take precedence; but this is a practice that properly angers the great rank and file of collectors, savoring as it does of a surrender to the wealthy collector, who alone can pay the prices asked for such special items. Still, it is probably a legitimate industry, and the enterprise of supplying the few outstanding collectors with such made-to-order rarities continues more and more to gain favor among the publishers. But I question the ultimate wisdom of antagonizing the smaller collectors, who after all comprise a majority of the fraternity.

Then there are the limited editions privately printed by collectors themselves, usually for their friends. These are invariably first editions of considerable interest, and the limitation is usually severe. Such publications are made possible by the purchase of unpublished manuscripts, or by the connivance of the author; sometimes an author will himself issue a special and advance edition of a small work. Always the price of those that reach the market is high; frequently it is forbidding. But the young collector will see few of these rare brochures. They are for an inner circle that he cannot hope to penetrate.

I have said—and it is true—that often a first edition is the best edition. It is equally true that often it is not. I have touched very briefly on pirated books,

MERLIN

but they deserve a paragraph of their own. In earlier days, before the matter of international copyright had been clarified to any degree, there flourished publishers in America and in England—perhaps elsewhere—who specialized in paper-backed volumes, which were sold for small sums and had a wide distribution. For the most part, the books were reprints of old tales by popular authors, upon which copyright had long expired; but there were some that would seem to have been deliberate pilferings. At any rate, certain English tales were seized by American publishers—from the magazines—and put into covers before a similar service could be performed for them in their own land. Similarly, American stories were seized by English publishers and brought out cheaply in England. Thus certain volumes of Stevenson and Kipling and Hardy, to mention only three names, were first published in the atrocious American paper-backs of the 1880's and 1890's, and certain volumes of Mark Twain and Bret Harte, to mention only two Americans, were first issued by the paper-back pirates of London. All were quite horrible specimens of bookmaking, and they are even more shocking as they usually turn up today, after having been kicked around the world for many years. The question involved is: shall these pirated editions be called first editions, or shall they be ignored—as no doubt

they deserve to be—in favor of the first *authorized* printings?

The answer would seem to be obvious, but there are still dealers and collectors who raise the point. I heartily sympathize with the bibliographer who does not care to recognize these scarred and unbeautiful things, and with the dealer who does not like to sell them: "I simply won't do it!" said one of the latter to me recently. But I cannot think what they are going to do about it. The books may have been unauthorized, they may be brutally unlovely, but they exist. They were published, in most instances, long before the authorized edition saw print. The dates of publication, even to the month and day, are plainly printed on their hideous covers, after the fashion of their time. There they are, dated months, years, sometimes decades before the first authorized issues.

The collector's attitude toward such atrocities, I find, depends almost entirely upon whether *he* owns them or the other fellow. It is the man who has them not, and despairs of getting them, who is most eager to legislate them out of existence. They are scarce enough in all conscience. Well, abuse them as heartily as you may wish to, my collecting friend; hide them away in morocco boxes made to look like books, but acquire them if you can find them. They are the veritable first editions.

A while ago, a bit humorously, I spoke of an original manuscript as being, in the last analysis, the only real first edition of a work of literary art. It is not, of course, so called, since one does not begin to think in terms of editions until a work has been published in its own covers. But the desirability and importance of manuscripts is not a subject to be passed with a whimsical aside. Be quite sure that in the matter of values they will always bring prices astoundingly greater than any mere first edition. For they *do* get onto the market. In recent years, the most sensational manuscript sale was that of the holograph manuscript of *Alice's Adventures Underground*, which, revised and enlarged, became in print the famous *Alice in Wonderland*. This extraordinary bit of autography sold at auction for a figure close to $75,000 and was almost immediately resold by its purchaser for a sum reported to be exactly twice that. A somewhat less celebrated manuscript, but of immense importance—the manuscript of Joyce's *Ulysses*—was sold at the famous Quinn sale for a beggarly $1,900, and is now held, I am told, at $13,000, by its fortunate possessor.

So much, in passing, for original manuscripts, a subject for an entire volume. It is unlikely that the small collector will encounter anything important in this field; but he never can tell. Out of old trunks and

wardrobes they rise, at times, like islands from the sea, and he is a lucky fellow who is at hand to seize them.

The whole subject of book collecting is too wide and ramified for any writer to hope to cover it briefly. There are many volumes in the libraries concerned with its more advanced stages. What I have written here is addressed to the beginning collector, and what questions I have attempted to answer have been questions actually asked by young seekers after information. In large part, I have talked of first editions—modern first editions—which are the most immediate subjects of interest to the neophyte; it is the modern books that are most likely to turn up in his path. The rest he will learn for himself as he goes along. He will learn by his mistakes and by his triumphs; he will learn from catalogues and from other collectors. He will learn even from dealers, although there is a curious tendency on the part of these excellent gentlemen, in conversation, to make a dark secret of book values. There are, however, a few points that must be stressed in conclusion, because they are important.

First, to command a respectable figure in the market, a volume must be in good condition. There is no virtue in dirt, and no merit in books that are tattered and incomplete, unless they be books of such rarity as

to be unprocurable in better shape. The better the book, the better the price. A good rule to follow, I think, is that of passing by all books that are not in the best of condition, unless the searcher knows them to be rare in any state.

Second, age by itself means, of necessity, nothing. A book may be quite old, indeed, and still be utterly worthless. The commonest mistake of the ignorant is to suppose that books dated prior to the Civil War are very old, and therefore very valuable. In the bookstalls of Europe I have seen innumerable volumes dated in the 1600's and 1700's priced at the equivalent of twenty-five cents. It is all they are worth. Yet a book dated as recently as, say, 1892 may be quite rare and valuable. It depends upon the book, not upon the date. The only safe rule I can offer with reference to age is this: all books printed before the year 1500 are likely to command a decent sale figure —anywhere, that is, from ten dollars to several hundred dollars; after that date, it depends upon the book.

Finally, it is not possible to sell books to dealers for the prices that dealers sell books to collectors. The dealer must have his profit. There are good dealers and bad dealers, honest dealers and unscrupulous dealers. Some will fleece you if they can; others will never think of it. For the most part, you must

discover the good dealers by experience, my bookish friend, then stick to them. But if you study your catalogues with care, and keep track of the prevailing sales prices, you will know whether you are being offered too little for your books. A fair price to you, for a good copy of an esteemed volume, should be about half the figure at which it is offered for sale, except in the case of an unusually rare item, when you should be entitled to about two-thirds of the sale price. Books in foreign languages, unless you know exactly what you are doing, I should advise you to let alone.

Now, at the end, I protest again that the happiest feature of book collecting is not its possibilities for profit, but its possibilities for happiness. In the last analysis, the date upon a title-page is of far less importance than what an author has to say between the covers. Remember that while a book uncut—that is, with untrimmed margins—is an excellent thing to own, a book unopened—that is, with the pages uncut for reading—is something in the nature of a confession. The collecting and the reading should go hand in hand; the business of selling for profit should be a by-product. A sufficiently wide understanding of that dictum, and of the principle at the heart of it, would almost usher in the millennium.

BYWAYS OF BOOK COLLECTING

BYWAYS OF BOOK COLLECTING

FASCINATING as are the sights along the main road of book collecting—that broad, well-paved, well-lighted thoroughfare—it is on the humbler roads, the little lanes and bypaths, that the majority must adventure. Not for the many are the great and expensive rarities—the folio Shakespeares, the *Pickwicks* in parts, the veritable first editions of Walton's *Angler* and *Pilgrim's Progress*. But a large measure of contentment may be found along the quieter avenues, and now and again a miracle may occur to justify one's faith.

"Adventures," said Disraeli, "are to the adventurous"; but 'tis no adventure, surely, to write a letter to a dealer and commission him to find one a treasure upon which one's heart is set. He will find it, no doubt, if it is to be found; and one may become its possessor, thereafter, if one but have the price. But where is the adventure? Where is the happiness that should go hand in hand with all collecting? Is satisfaction to be found only in acquisition?

The mighty men of dollars tread the highroad and assuredly their plunder is magnificent. But it is acquired merely by a nod of the head, by the scribble

of a signature, and thereafter, in too many instances, it rests forever upon a handsome shelf, a mere museum piece. Few miracles occur along the highroad, since shrewd men stand always between the purchaser and the purchase; but along the byways, the miracles still lurk, and adventure is to the adventurous.

Pleasant tales are told of the miracles of other days. There is the tale of the *Tamerlane* that was purchased for a few cents in Baltimore, by a young clerk browsing in his luncheon period. There is the romantic story of the two English poets, similarly browsing at a London stall, and their discovery of FitzGerald's *Omar Khayyam*: through their praise of it was begun the great overture of praise that has made the price of this first pamphlet, today, a thing prohibitive and splendid. There is the tale of the Shakespeare folio that sent Bishop Frank Bristol of Chicago hurrying to Colorado, to stand breathless and unbiblically covetous before a shorn margin inked with the bewildering hieroglyphic that is Shakespeare's signature. And there is the fragrant anecdote of the discovery of Tenant de Latour, as recorded in his *Mémoires d'un Bibliophile*, which is so charming that it should be retold, as recently it *was* retold in pleasant translation, by J. Christian Bay, in one of Walter Hill's attractive catalogues.

In 1827, during a book-hunting promenade along

THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD.

A TALE.

Suppoſed to be written by HIMSELF.

Sperate miſeri, cavete fælices.

VOL. I.

SALISBURY:
Printed by B. COLLINS,
For F. NEWBERY, in Pater-Noſter-Row, London.
MDCCLXVI.

the Quai du Louvre, Latour found a copy of the *Imitation of Christ*, attributed to Thomas à Kempis, a volume published by Lemercier of Paris, in 1751. The edition was ordinary, and one of many of the period. But beneath the frontispiece had been written the legend "A J.-J. Rousseau." The price was sixty-five centimes. The collector walked straightway to the Rue des Marais Saint-Germain, where his edition of Rousseau's *Oeuvres* was at that time being bound, to compare the signature with a facsimile of one of the philosopher's letters. Before reaching the bindery, however, as he walked across the bridge, Latour thumbed the leaves of his little book and found in the margin a manuscript note. Collectors and scholars may conceive of the emotion of that moment.

"He broke into a profuse perspiration," says Mr. Bay, "and looked further into the book. Presently, in the lower margin of a page, below Book II, chapter 9, he found another note. The four last words of this chapter are 'enemies who never rest.' These four words had been deleted, and underneath had been written, in Latin, this comment: 'Bad persons are not dead.' Here, then, was the misanthrope, par excellence. The inspection of the facsimiles showed that close comparison indeed proved the authenticity of the inscription—so the happy finder repaired, while

experiencing 'a species of vertigo which will be understood by five or six persons in Paris,' to the domicile of his friend, the Vicomte F., who immediately verified the discovery.

"Next day he visited others. Some shrugged their shoulders—what proof was there, after all, of the handwriting being that of Rousseau? At last, however, Mr. Latour called on one very sagacious bibliophile, who opened the book, turned the leaves carefully, and pronounced these magic words: '*Ah, voila de la pervenche!*' There were some leaves of the periwinkle among the pages, here and there."

Periwinkle! Rousseau, a friend of flowers, had admired this plant more than any other. Probably he had carried the little volume in his pocket on one of his walks and, refreshing himself with the fragrance of the periwinkle leaves, had dropped some in the book. Monsieur de Musset-Pathay, however, shook his learned head. How was it that he, the author of the *Histoire de la Vie et des Ouvrages de Rousseau*, had found no single utterance of the philosopher to indicate that he had read the *Imitation?* Meanwhile, the find was debated everywhere—"even in the libraries"—and Latour, having had made a handsome slip-case for his treasure, once more made himself master of Rousseau's *Confessions*. And in time he found what he was seeking. In the year 1764,

Rousseau had visited his friend Dupeyrou, at Cressier, and during their walks about the hill of Bellevue, the philosopher had been ravished by the sight of a growth of periwinkle.

"This," says Mr. Bay, "was one fact. Another fact was that in the very edition of the *Oeuvres inédites* of Jean-Jacques, published under the scholarly care of Musset-Pathay, Mr. Latour found a letter dated at Moitiers-Travers on January 20, 1763, and addressed to Duchesne, the bookseller, to which the following postscript had been added: 'Please note the following books which I ask you to enclose in your first shipment: Pascal's *Pensées*, La Bruyere's *Oeuvres*, the *Imitation of Christ*, in Latin.' "

Such books, Mr. Bay very properly adds, are intended only for the rare and few who are worthy of being favored by fate.

And sometimes miracles force themselves upon us. One of the first in my own experience occurred when I was still a novice. I had been puttering for some time in a small shop, in a backwash of a large city, and had found nothing that appealed to me. Yet it was the sort of dingy little place that looked as if it might hold treasures unknown to its proprietor. This proprietor, a nervous, bird-like little man, who looked like a character out of Dickens, was excessively alert

and affable, and was determined to make a sale. He pestered me a great deal, offering innumerable volumes for which I had no earthly use or desire, including, I remember, an illustrated history of the American civil war. I was on the point of leaving the establishment when he produced somebody-or-other's *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, and in a sporting spirit offered it to me for exactly one-half the price marked plainly on its flyleaf. The original price was three dollars, and I was to have this very unimportant volume for one-fifty. I did not want it, but turning over a few pages I chanced upon a paragraph that pleased me, and as I wanted something new to read that evening, I gave him the money and slipped my purchase into a pocket of my overcoat.

That evening, I plucked it from the table onto which I had tossed it, and began to hunt for the paragraph that had caught my eye; but instead of the paragraph I came with blank astonishment upon a four-page letter tucked away between two of the leaves—and as a result of that paralyzing discovery, I never did find the paragraph nor read farther in the book. The letter was a quite genuine and exceedingly fine autograph communication from Scott to one of his friends. Some former owner of the book and of the letter had brought the two into this happy

association, I suppose, and then had died, leaving his library to unappreciative heirs.

There are few collectors seriously practicing the craft who could not tell similar—and probably better —stories, for that sort of thing is constantly happening to somebody. The point I should like to make is this: it happens for the most part along the byways, in the queer corners and odd booklofts of the cities, rather than in the glittering establishments whose business it is to sell rarities with a full knowledge of their contents and their associations. Nor is this disparagement of such establishments. It is the merest reporting of facts. In short, there is more pleasure, more adventure, more honest fun in dusty, personal search for book treasures than in the perhaps more elegant enterprise of calling for what one wants, and removing one's gloves only to sign a check. I have done both. I still do both. But of the two, I prefer the former method.

Such book talk as the foregoing may seem to savor of boasting; but it is not quite that. Collectors *do* boast of their finds; but no more, I fancy, than salesmen boast of their sales, or housewives of their bread, or salesmen and housewives, in collaboration, of their inimitable children. It is a little natural exuberance over some bit of happiness or triumph in a world that is not, for everybody, ridiculously filled with

either. A little natural enthusiasm over so pleasing a justification of one's taste and one's hobby. A bit of rationalizing, of a sort, perhaps—and how many of our acts and utterances are not, consciously or otherwise, justifications of our lives and thought?

A great deal of nonsense has been written, first and last, about the book collector's art, and what is worse, written by persons who ought to know better. In few other enterprises calling for intelligence are judgment and balance, restraint and common-sense, more necessary than in the acquisition of books, whether for sentiment, for profit, or for culture. And few other enterprises, intelligently followed, will yield a more satisfying return. But book collecting is not for everybody. The superficial itch to acquire and possess a rare item of print is far less important a requisite than the deep urge to caress and enjoy at will, some work of lasting charm and fineness. Admitting the element of vanity that enters into the transaction, admitting even a sentiment that is in danger of becoming sentimentality, there is something better than either vanity or sentiment, as those words are ordinarily understood, behind the activities of sincere and honest collectors—collectors who collect because they must, not because it is a fad calculated to lend them distinction or bring them profit.

A well-known writer of the day—Miss Carolyn

Wells, not to be secret about it—not long ago was publicly confessing. She would appear to have collected almost everything, at one time and another, and ultimately she collected books. Her conclusion, after sating herself upon everything that she undertook, is that collecting is the "Idiot's Delight." It would be too bad if the long and honorable line of book collectors from, let us say, the fifteenth-century Earl of Worcester to the twentieth-century Amy Lowell, were to be so sweepingly asylumed by any greater vociferation than this single voice. And it would be too bad if any of the humbler, practicing collectors were, by such an assertion, made to blush for their pleasant hobby.

The way Miss Wells went about her book collecting was this: she sent copies of their books to various writers whom she knew, asking for inscriptions. From this she progressed to asking for inscriptions from writers she did not know, accepting the dare implied in the pronouncements of friends that she could not "get" such men as Kipling and Conrad. She got them both, and many others, and is now inclined to be ashamed of those proceedings, as, of course, she should be, since her confession makes it clear that her emotion was not genuine. At length, her "indefatigable zeal" procured for her every inscribed book

that she wanted, and she looked about her for new worlds to conquer.

Then she began to purchase first editions and association copies. She "achieved" these, in her own phrase; all, apparently, that she wanted; but they left her cold. However, she stuck to it. She collected books "until the whole game was a squeezed orange, a burst bubble." Hearing that Walt Whitman was a fine author to collect, but that it was "now too late to get his most desirable editions," she accepted the implied challenge and collected Whitman. Her justification, at this point, is revealing. "As a poet or as a prose writer," she says, "Whitman was far from being one of my favorites. In fact, he seems to me a conceited old egoist, and if that is tautological, it is also true. But if he was a good one to collect, and if it was impossible to collect him now, he was my meat!"

So she set to work "in her own way," which was to write to every book dealer she could learn of, in America and England and elsewhere, and ask for quotations. Inside of a year, she had the largest Whitman collection in the world. A little later, she had every possible edition or special copy of Whitman, except one item of almost desperate rarity. And finally she learned of a copy of *that* that was for sale, and purchased it, with the dire result, she asserts, of

finding her Whitman collection complete, "and therefore of no possible further interest."

Now, of course, the author of those naïve confessions, despite her assertion that she "carefully studied the psychology of book collecting and the character of the collectors," never found out what collecting really means. Her every experience was born of a desire to "show" somebody. It was a "try anything once" spirit that started her off. Anything for a dare. In youth, I fancy, she touched her tongue to cold steel, or bumped her head against a wall, harder than the other fellow. Possibly that is the right spirit for a "go-getter," but it is not the right spirit for a collector. Realizing this, Miss Wells admits that she was not a born collector, and pays tardy tribute to the earnest seekers; but fundamentally one doubts that she has any conception of the great gulfs that lie between the collecting of hatpins and the collecting of books. Not once, apparently, was she moved by an honest love or enthusiasm for the thing collected. Never has she learned that the happiness and profit is not principally in the acquiring, but in the seeking *and* acquiring in a field where no final goal is possible. Never, one imagines, has she been thrilled by new adventures in appreciation. Her eye was fixed always upon some arbitrary objective, and she had not the time—or the inclination—for the

pleasant sights along the way. "To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive," said Stevenson; but this indomitable traveler wished only to arrive, and having arrived could think of nothing else to do until a new dare lashed her to further excursions toward the mirage of happiness.

It is, of course, the privilege of Miss Wells, as of other citizens, to think her own thoughts, and even to publish them; but by publishing them she invites comment from those others who, by her action, are placed in a false position, who are judged and condemned by the proprietary standards of an individual. The recklessness of some of her ukases is flagrant, and her paper, signed though it is by a name known principally to the fiction-reading public, has possibilities to bewilder and embarrass inexperienced collectors. Moreover, the confession is an excellent text for a preachment on book collecting asserting the other point of view, since it states with such carelessness so much that is demonstrably false and misleading. As for example that "collected books are not read and are not meant to be read." In point of fact, collected books *are* read by collectors worthy of the name, although they are certainly not manhandled nor loaned to others. And as for example that "taste and discrimination don't count—all *that* is in the catalogues," an assertion that smacks almost

of wilful inaccuracy. What is to be said for a taste and a discrimination that collected such items as silver toys, souvenir spoons, and trick paper weights with as much gusto as it collected the world's literature? It is not at all unfair to insist that Miss Wells's every activity in a collecting way has been a form of "stunt."

On the more technical side, her article is equally at fault. "The value of collectible books bears no relation whatever to the matter of the volume, but merely to its manner," she declares. "A first edition or a rare copy is the same text as that in a popular issue of the same book, but one is of large money value and the other is not." That is only half true, and therefore it is false. There are frequently important differences between the texts of first and succeeding editions, of the deepest interest to scholarly collectors. Yet again the reckless confessor asserts: "One need not be a scholar to collect books. Indeed, I've never known a scholar who did collect them." The first statement is indubitably true; but need one be a scholar to *love* books? The second statement is merely a line of autobiography. But the inference of both statements that few, if any, book collectors are scholars, is as untrue as the further assertion that "there is nothing literary about it (book collecting), and nothing erudite." Miss Wells's generalities apply

only to the unlettered collectors who collect for profit or for distinction, and they are a minority of the race. And, anyway, why the emphasis on scholarship, a dusty enough thing all too often? Are not scholars as vainglorious and envious a group, in given instances, as any group of collectors could be? I have indicated the attitude of certain scholars in the anecdote about Tenant de Latour.

One can only feel sorry for Miss Wells. She knew no better than to follow the glittering highroad, and apparently her purse was equal to the strain. But no wonder she failed to enjoy it! How could she have expected to? Anybody with money can shut his eyes and spend it. It is not an achievement; it takes no skill; there is nothing in the feat to be proud of. I venture to suppose that the bored possessor of the world's greatest Whitman collection would have found greater happiness had she gone forth herself upon the chase, and—above all things—had she elected to collect some writer with whose performance she was in sympathy. She wonders if, perhaps, a First Folio Shakespeare or a Gutenberg Bible might not have given her a thrill. One is certain that neither would have done anything of the sort, after the first rapture of acquisition had passed.

For myself, a collector with the notorious lean purse of the journalist, should I, through some

miracle, become possessed of a Gutenberg Bible, or a Folio Shakespeare, or even a Caxton, I should instantly sell it for whatever it would bring, and I should spend part of the money, at least, upon volumes more suited to my collections. Time was when I thought to compete with the British Museum and with Mr. Morgan, but those were my salad days, when my hair was long—and my tongue—and when I had learned somewhat less about both life and letters than I have learned since. Today my collecting is along the byways, and far indeed from the beaten track of even the lesser collectors. It is my pleasure to collect the editions of certain writers whose work I admire, but whose excellence is less apparent to others than to myself. It is my pleasure to collect the numerous editions of single works whose merits are to me conspicuous—as for instance, *Omar Khayyam* and *Aucassin and Nicolette*—and the *ana* of such quiescent mysteries as that of *Edwin Drood.*

Why? Partly, I suppose, because I wish my collections to be "different"; partly because I cannot compete with the men who go in for, say, Stevenson and Conrad, or the ladies who go in for, say, Whitman; partly because by following unbeaten trails I am myself unhampered by competition; but most of all because I have a genuine affection for the men or the subjects that I am collecting. Certainly I take no

shame in being a collector. In fact it is my appalling and heretical thought that, down the ages, the collector has done more than the critic to advertise the master works and preserve them against oblivion.

ON THE REBINDING OF BOOKS

ON THE REBINDING OF BOOKS

Browsing through the catalogues of booksellers, those most seductive of pamphlets, I am frequently led to wonder what certain distinguished writers of the past would say, if it were possible for them to see some of their first and rare editions as they are today preserved for the collector. They were poor enough in their time, most of the great ones of literary chronicle, and were quite happy with their sober little volumes as they came from the press. Offhand, I think of only one among the poets who was vain enough of his performance to wish to overdress it: Rogers, the banker-poet; and poor Rogers is rather completely forgotten today. His editions, when they are sold at all, are sold for their handsome plates and bindings. But of Charles Lamb it is convincingly asserted that he preferred all books to show ample evidence of their readers' close attention, and that he preferred them in their original dress. "Lamb had the finest collection of shabby and dog-eared volumes I have ever seen," wrote Crabb Robinson, somewhere in his entertaining *Diaries*.

What, for instance, would Robert Burns say, were

it possible for him to read the following paragraphs, copied verbatim from an English book list?

> *Burns' (Robert) Poems*, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect; the scarce *First Issue of the First Edinburgh Edition* (distinguished by the misprint "Duke of Boxburgh" in the list of Subscribers, and also the misprint "stinking" on page 263), with a nice impression of the pretty stipple portrait by Beugo after Nasmyth, 8vo, Edinburgh, 1787. A Unique Copy, most superbly bound in a richly jeweled, gilt, and inlaid binding to a special design which will never be duplicated, by the famous binders, Sangorski & Sutcliffe. A Marvellous Specimen of Luxurious Binding, the beauty of which is but faintly suggested by the reduced reproduction shown on Plate 1. Price 110 pounds sterling.
>
> This wonderful copy of the first Edinburgh Edition of the works of Scotland's premier poet, is bound in violet levant morocco with leather joints and heather-colored levant doublures and fly-leaves, the whole elaborately gold tooled, inlaid with 450 separate pieces of various colored leathers, and enriched by the insertion of 44 precious stones, comprising 4 Cairn-gorms (typi-

cal stones of Scottish association), 18 Amethysts, 10 Moonstones, 7 Fire Opals, 4 Topazes and a Ruby, together with pieces of pearl. It is further embellished by a Miniature Portrait on Ivory, set in a gilt frame and inserted in the front doublure. The central feature of the front cover is a design in which the Arms of the poet, as he himself described them in a letter to Mr. Cunningham, are depicted upon a background of heather, closely gold-dotted, enriched with Amethysts and Cairn-gorms. The close association of the poet in his social life with Freemasonry, is suggested by decorative renderings of the Masonic symbols of the Compass and Square, the Plumb, the Level, and the Gauge, which are embodied in the enclosing border. A sunken panel in the center of the back cover is occupied by a thistle design, the flowers formed of pieces of pearl and Amethysts, upon a background of close pointille; the rest of the cover having a design enriched with Topazes and Moonstones, in which are introduced further Masonic emblems of the Rough and Perfect Ashlar, the Gavel and Chisels, the supporting Pillars, and the Mosaic Pavement of the Lodge.

The miniature portrait in the front doublure is enclosed by a floral border, enriched with

Moonstones, around which is a gold tooled thistle diaper design, completed by a border containing the opening lines of the author's world-famed "Auld Lang Syne." The back doublure contains a design in a sunken panel, of an emblem from a Royal Arch Mason's Jewel, symbolical of Creation, the elements of Fire and Water, and Eternity; the gold-dotted background being decorated with Fire Opals and surrounded by a thistle design with an inscription from "Green Grow the Rushes O." The levant fly-leaves are covered with gold tooled inscriptions from the author's poems, "To a Mountain Daisy" and "Is there for Honest Poverty," and the panels of the back of the book are appropriately inlaid and gold tooled.

A finishing touch is given to this superbly beautiful volume by the addition of an Exquisite Painting of Edinburgh, executed on the fore-edges under the gold.

Reading the foregoing, one might be pardoned for believing it a check-list of the plunder found in a cache of hidden treasure. Yet this extraordinary description of a book—offered for sale for a beggarly $500 or $600—actually appeared, as I have stated, in the catalogue of a London dealer. It is not

a hoax; not the nightmare of a collector suddenly gone mad. The book exists. By this time, I make no doubt, it has been purchased at the price affixed, and is the prized possession of some American gentleman with more money than sense. As to the uniqueness of the item—so reticently suggested by the enthusiastic blurb-writer—I am not so sure. One would like to think that the incredible thing stood alone in its field, a glittering monument to the bad taste and vulgarity of its designer and its possessor. And I do not doubt the assertion that the design "never will be duplicated." But the designer capable of producing this one, will in all probability produce others equally dreadful, and for such atrocities I am afraid there are purchasers without number. In all honesty, I must admit that the volume described above is the most outrageous thing of its kind I have ever seen offered for sale; but I have seen other descriptions that suggested other volumes only slightly less hideous, and I am quite certain that there have been far greater horrors created and sold, the catalogues of whose virtues I have not seen.

I am sure that the man who caused the volume under discussion to be rebound as described, thought he was giving it a dress worthy of its author and its rarity. And I hope that its purchaser is very happy in its possession. Personally, I would not have it

around the house, and if it were presented to me, tomorrow, I should instantly sell it for what I could get. Imagine Burns in that raiment! "Green Grow the Rushes O!" "To a Mountain Daisy!" "Is There for Honest Poverty!" And all about and all around, fire opals, moonstones, amethysts, and the gold tooled emblems of masonry!

It is not my idea to quarrel with the idea of rebinding. I might as well quarrel with the idea of new overcoats. When a new overcoat is needed, it must be acquired. But one may have taste even in the matter of overcoats. The question of rebinding suggests a feature of book collecting that requires explanation, for in some of its aspects it is deplorable.

In the catalogues of most dealers, under the second letter of the alphabet, the devoted reader of such literature will discover a number of items classified under the single word "Binding." They may be very desirable volumes, or they may be utterly worthless save as specimens of the bookbinding art, but in practically every case you may be sure that their classification was achieved by a realization of their greater salability as *binding* than as *books*. Sometimes the bindings are historical, and of considerable interest. A book may be quite stupid in itself, and yet achieve a respectable longevity in libraries and museums because of its covers. Perhaps it is from

one of the royal libraries, and has the arms of its royal owners tooled upon it. Many of the eighteenth century monarchs had notable private libraries, which were later dispersed. Perhaps it is an example of the art of a celebrated binder, one whose skill and taste have given him a standing among collectors. There are today binders of extraordinary excellence whose work is deserving of any collector's attention, among them the firm of Sangorski & Sutcliffe who executed the finding I have been excoriating—no doubt at the behest of some exotic customer. Or perhaps it is merely a delightful work of art by some obscure craftsman, unknown to fame, the sheer charm of which makes it worthy of survival and worth the figure asked. A work of art, after all, is a work of art, whether it has been performed upon a book cover or upon a wide canvas. Too often, however, the volume advertised for sale as "Binding," is neither historical nor charming as to its raiment, nor even old. It is simply a gaudy gymcrack, as in the case of the Burns volume, offered to the wealthy "sucker" who likes to think himself a collector. The Edinburgh Burns of 1787 is a fine and desirable volume in its original state, but the true collector will have no such copy of it as has been described above.

To the seasoned collector of taste and intelligence, my argument for and against rebinding will savor

somewhat of impertinence and platitude; but it is to the young collector of excellent intention and small experience that I am offering—as in my earlier chapters—this warning and this advice. The only rules are those established by intelligence and taste, and the first and most important of the dogmas of book collecting, having to do with binding and condition, is this: the most desirable and valuable copy of a rare book is a clean and perfect copy in its original covers. I could not make it more clear if I spent a page upon it. When an experienced collector comes upon such a description as I have quoted, whether or not it appears under the head of "Binding," he is not deceived. He knows exactly what he is being offered; to wit: several pounds of leather, of a superior grade, and half a pint or so of pearl inlay and other frippery. To be sure, the leather may be blue straight-grain morocco, or dark green French levant, or crimson morocco extra, or something or other else to the same effect. I have handled one piece of binding that was achieved with *human* pelt. It may be hand tooled, or gold tooled, or blind tooled, or paneled. It may have mosaic panels of red and violet. The volume may boast leather joints, orange levant doublures, or silk fly-leaves; and it may be enriched by the insertion of any number of precious stones, arranged to symbolize anything or nothing under the canopy. *Omnia*

vanitas! The collector knows precisely what he is being offered. It is a work of art, not a book. And often it is not even a work of art.

Now it may be argued that no unworthy book will be accorded such splendid treatment. The statement is only half true, and the question involved is not a question of worthiness at all. With the unworthy books, the binders of earth may do what they will, for all of me. It is of worthy books only that I am talking, and the question is whether they shall be rebound in any case other than that of absolute necessity. The negative answer may seem obvious, but in point of fact, I am acquainted with a collector of some repute who rebinds practically every book that comes into his possession. And he has a catholic taste. Without reference to the condition or the beauty of the original covers, off they come, to be replaced with gleaming leather, in furtherance of some insane scheme of his own. He believes in treating his books "right," and right treatment means, for him, an expenditure of money upon handsome bindings. With plenty of the former he can gratify his dubious taste in the latter. He would treat a small nephew "right"—if he had a small nephew—by making him ill with candy. His choicest works are hurried off to the binder—the best, of course—and from the hands of that deft workman they come back

swathed in gilt and leather, indubitably handsomer in most cases, but utterly lacking in atmosphere. A sad metamorphosis. To preserve the value of his rarer books—perhaps also to soothe his conscience—he "binds in" the original covers, at the end of the book. This is accomplished by removing the cloth from the boards and remounting it upon sheets of paper. In reality, he is undermining the value of his books, for a rebound volume is far less desirable in the market than the same volume in its original cloth, or even paper.

And surely it is this very atmosphere, so ruthlessly sacrificed, that he should care for most, sentimentalist that he is. It is in large part this atmosphere that lends to a rare volume, an association copy, a first edition, whatever sentimental or commercial value it may have; that exalts it over an infinitely better printed and less inaccurate edition fresh from the press. This gentleman's intentions are, no doubt, excellent, but he is a sinister vandal, none the less. When he decides, some day, to sell his library, he is going to get a severe jolt, for in the auction room his books will bring him less than half of what he fondly imagines them to be worth. More and more, as the years pass, is the distance widening between the sums paid for the fine old works in their original state and the same items decked out in pea-

cock attire. But it is too bad that he will have to wait until his sale to be disillusioned. He will destroy so many fine books before that unhappy day. However honestly mistaken he may be, the collector who rebinds because in his ignorance or fatuity he believes it the thing to do, should be taken to one side and in some fashion *made* to see the error of his way.

Imagine a collector of the pompous, orange levant school, acquiring that sober little first volume of Keats, and proceeding to strip away the dull covers that, for all he knows to the contrary, may have been handled by the poet himself. Imagine him replacing them with crimson morocco extra, and solemnly putting the little book away beside some hundreds of other little books in similar trappings. At a blow, he has deprived it of its personality, and lost it in a sea of blinding color. Keats has vanished, and where he stood gleams now the latest art work of Messrs. Pigskin & Morocco of London and New York. What if the volume have a coffee stain upon its cover? A coffee stain may seem a halo, if one but have enough imagination. Suppose the spilled coffee to have been that of Master Charles Lamb of India House, pondering his volume over the breakfast table—what then? And if the volume be that known as *Falstaff's Letters*, who is to say that the disfiguring stain is *not* the veritable record of a Lamb household dis-

aster? "Saint Charles"—as Thackeray called him—had many copies of the little book, at one time and another, which he rescued from the bins and presented to his friends, one of whom—James White—was its author.

I do not for a moment believe that either Lamb or Keats, however sumptuously attired, would suffer spiritually. I cannot imagine either of the works that I have suggested developing an unnatural vanity. But I can conceive of them as being very sad indeed about all their finery, much as, I am persuaded, a small boy of the right sort, suddenly translated to velvet and lace, would miss with genuine sorrow the hole in his trousers pocket. For a book thus remade is decidedly not the same book. The modest, quaint little pocketpiece has disappeared, and in its stead there glitters a magnificent hybrid, fitted only to lie upon the parlor table beside the padded leather edition of Mrs. Hemans and the colossal unloveliness of the Family Album. These are not commonplaces upon which I am insisting; and if they seem so, it is to be remembered that the commonplaces of one man are the discoveries of another. Certainly the average amateur begins his career with a vague notion that anything bound in leather is important, and that books in cloth are comparatively insignificant. And it is to be remarked that only by

a relentless insistence upon the seeming commonplaces is any truth established.

One may not claim, of course, that no book should be rebound. A badly damaged volume, if it be not a candidate for the furnace, may with propriety be given a new dress—possibly a handsome one—whether it be a First Folio or a jolly little modern *Elia* with illustrations by Mr. Brock. Still, one who believes as I do will save himself much unhappiness and trouble if, in purchasing for his collection, he rejects with a firm hand damaged or imperfect copies, however readily they lend themselves to rebinding; save only in the case of books of such extreme rarity that he is fortunate to find them in *any* condition. In general, reject all but the best. In the long run, it will pay you in happiness and in dollars.

Rebinding is, of course, less deplorable in the case of volumes originally issued in paper wrappers, for in rebinding these, everything is retained, even to the advertisements in the back; and the back strip of the wrapper is carefully removed and mounted upon a page of the volume. In France, most published books are put forth in wrappers, and the purchaser may bind his copy when and how he chooses. And rebinding is permissible in the case of a genuinely desirable item, seldom to be met with in its original state, and therefore unlikely to fall to the

lot of the average collector. Such a volume may be snapped up when seen, even without covers. It is, of course, imperative to rebind, often, in the case of authentic treasures of the highest rarity, where necessity compels reinforcement if the volumes are to be preserved to the world. But where the original covers are sound and decently clean—even, I think, when they are not particularly clean—it is criminal to remove them merely to satisfy one's whim for a rainbow-colored library. A great many wealthy collectors mistake a crass love of glitter and gloss for an affection for fine old books. Rebind your ordinary reading copies and your reference volumes, if you must have color; your telephone directory, if you care to; but wherever possible leave your first editions as they came from the publisher.

Even where rebinding is desirable and imperative, it is often a dangerous business, and always it should be entrusted to an expert. Often it means a sad sacrifice of margins, which is little less than sacrilege. Preserve your margins at their original width. In the older books, margins frequently contain manuscript notes of considerable interest. I have seen many fine books, thus annotated, so mutilated by trimming as to be almost valueless. Even with the expert binder, there is likely to be some cutting, if you are not insistent. With the ordinary workman there is actual

peril. It seems to be his ambition to cut down a work to the very typeline, and where possible to reduce a folio to a quarto. Just why this saving of paper seems necessary to him, I have no idea; perhaps he takes the strips home to his children, or uses them as pipe-lighters. Yet the rarer books depend for much of their value upon their height and the width of their margins; they are actually measured in fractions of inches, by special rules, to establish their superiority or inferiority to other copies known to exist. Some shocking things happen, I am told, even in the best of binderies. There is only one certain way, a friend assures me, to persuade a binder to follow directions. It is to stand over him with a shotgun throughout the entire performance—"giving him to understand that at the slightest evidence of unnecessary cutting, you will blow his back hair out through his whiskers!" It is a method I have not used, but it is said to be effective. For the most part, however, the better binders can be trusted to do as they are told, and many of them are admirable bookmen, with as fine a passion for wide margins as the collector himself.

Where ordinary repair work is required, it should be accomplished with extreme care by oneself, if possible, or given to a man who knows his business. A friend of mine who was employed in the Congressional Library, some years ago, told me of an in-

cident that still shocks me. He came suddenly upon a young woman assistant, a charming creature, happily humming a little song while soaking book labels off some fine old vellum bindings. She had ruined one volume before my friend came upon the scene, and was joyously proceeding with another when she was discovered. My friend made every effort to be kind, but the young woman was in tears when he had finished lecturing her. But then, my friend too was almost in tears. The thought of those vellum bindings profaned by a wet sponge overcame him. This is a bit off the main subject of the present discourse, but while these thoughts are in my head, I should like to say that such ignorance is not always confined to the minor employes of public libraries. In many large institutions the highest authorities are to blame for a distressing system of book mutilation. They allow their finest volumes to be made ugly by the use of rubber stamps or stencils, and many beautiful volumes are forever marred in order that they may be more perfectly classified. The plea that such volumes once placed in public collections will never come before the public for sale, is not a valid excuse. The practice is reprehensible, and closely akin to vandalism. It should be stopped by an act of Congress, if not by a bolt from the blue.

In the end, my advice about rebinding comes to

this: never rebind a book unless it is imperative. When it is imperative, rebind with taste and discretion. Eschew jeweled bindings and silk fly-leaves, even if you can afford them. Sobriety is as desirable in book binding as it is in dress. If you must have color and passion in your collection, let it be frankly extraneous; there is a way provided, and the experienced collectors know it. They cause to be manufactured handsome boxes only a trifle larger than the books that they are designed to hold; and in these leather-bound containers the volumes are laid away in their original state. The effect upon the bookshelf is that of magnificently bound volumes, but within each box the jewel lies just as it came down from another day.

OF PRESENTATION COPIES

OF PRESENTATION COPIES

It is a poor book-barrow that does not boast a presentation copy or two. Slim little books they are, as a rule, often with no lettering, gilt or black, on the cover to guide the prospective purchaser; but the trained eye seeks them out at a glance. Pathetic waifs, less soiled than their stouter brethren, for they have been far less read and handled, they are there for those who care to collect them; and to collect them is a kindly act. The price need be no deterrent for a quarter will procure the best and cleanest of them, and some may be had for a dime. They are not Landors, to be sure, nor Matthew Arnolds, nor even Neihardts; but they are presentation copies. Pluck them forth and blow away the dust, then turn to the handmade flyleaf. In every sort of handwriting, this is what you will behold:

To Ronsard Robinson,
Poet and Friend
these foolish trifles
by his sincere admirer,
Casanova Smith

Or, for "foolish trifles" read "thoughtless rhymes" or "unconsidered verses."

They are the hallmark of the amateur poet, these trite little phrases, and by the depth of their apparent humility may be measured the actual arrogance of their maker. The more he stresses the unimportance of his work the more certain one may be of his pride in it. They are always "verses"; never "poems." The volumes are "volumes of verse." Ah me! Those two delightful v's! Only an established poet, or an amateur of extraordinary age and sobriety, will call his product a "book of poems," a phrase in which there is little magic.

Prose or verse, however, the first book of the amateur goes forth inscribed. As a rule the edition is limited—how limited the author knows!—and right and left he gives them away to his friends and his enemies with impartial amiability, with "admiration" and with "respect," with "cordial regard" and with "all kind wishes." He is "profoundly aware of their insufficiencies," and "deeply sensible of their immaturity"; but he believes the "little volume may perhaps contain a line or a stanza not unworthy of thought and remembrance, and if so . . ." The rest is immortal. Courageous youth! He is first cousin to the preface-writer who, if his readers receive one-half the pleasure in reading the book that its author

enjoyed in writing it, is satisfied that he has not labored in vain. The original author of that line should be made the subject of a monograph and eternalized in stone.

Lucky indeed is the friend or critic who, by some curious mischance, receives a copy with flyleaf unravished of the author's pen; in all probability his copy is unique. One can imagine the subsequent career of that fortunate volume. What could not a shrewd bookseller do with it? In time it might become an item in a famous sale, significantly catalogued (in capital letters) as "the only copy not inscribed by the author." Possession of such a rarity should be enough to immortalize the purchaser. But one need not seek inscriptions at all to be assured of their presence; the titles of the volumes are sufficient guarantee, and they are curiously alike: "Clover Fields," "Corn Tassels," "Crocus and Daffodil," "Meadow Larks," and, in astronomical vein, "Star Dust," "Harvest Moon," "Beneath the Sun"; all variants of old successes, for in theory nothing succeeds like successful imitation, a theory the existence of which is well proved by the graceful monotony of the inscriptions.

Pathetic waifs indeed! When a dealer can offer them for a quarter or a dime, what can he have paid for them? And what manner of friend is he that has

sold them? Yet distribution of the word is a noble work, and among the greatest disseminators are young writers and their victims—I should say, their friends. Certain it is that the unhappy volumes, whatever the ethics of the situation may be, find a wider distribution under this system than they would be likely ever to achieve in a retail dispensary. Supposing, too, the author should become a fellow of vast importance in after years, his early editions would take on an astonishing value, and the friend who had parted with them for a pittance, and who might in that later day have sold them for a real consideration, would be well served for his betrayal; while the browsing, happy Autolycus who found them would be a lucky dog indeed, for, of course, they would be "first editions."

First editions! A second edition is much less likely to carry an inscription, for several reasons. In the first place, in a majority of instances there is no second edition, but where there is, the author has learned wisdom. Often enough he is become a cynic. Critics, reviewers, the public, have taught him things about his work that he never dreamed; he realizes in some measure the futility of fame. He is become canny, and the folly of giving something for nothing —even an inscription—has occurred to him. If an inscribed copy is wanted, let the request come

through a dealer, and let both dealer and author benefit. For that matter, an inscribed second edition has much less charm for a collector than an inscribed first edition. Very likely too, every one to whom the author would wish to give the book already possesses (or has sold) an inscribed first edition. Or the poor man may have run out of inscriptions, having paraphrased all the good ones; his own, those quoted in rare-book catalogues, and those invented by Mr. Richard Le Gallienne. Rather than repeat himself he will say nothing. A second edition is a joyless thing. Better that a work should never reach a second edition than that it should never reach a third!

Of course, the presentation of inscribed copies is not confined to the authors of the books presented. One friend may give to another a work that he has read and loved, in which case the gift may be accompanied by a happy inscription which a subsequent owner will do ill to remove. If the friends be men of note, how charming the association!—I mean, of course, for a subsequent owner whose madness is for biblio-plunder, whose biblio-bliss (as Mr. Mosher has it) is nowhere so ecstatic as in the realm of association copies. Suppose (to be droll) a volume of the great Tupper—a neat reprint—presented by Whistler to Ruskin; inside, a fine inscription signed with the famous butterfly; or a thin Schopenhauer

inscribed by Mr. Chesterton to Dean Inge; or even a stolen Gideon Bible with the familiar inscription of Mr. Mencken addressed to the author of "The Sheik." Any one of these would be worth preserving and handing down in the family, except that as a usual thing second generations are notoriously philistine, and turn over such treasures to be gibbeted in the Anderson Galleries. Then there are gifts of books as between friend and friend unknown to fame, so pleasantly inscribed as to make of erasure a sacrilege. It is my privilege to own a cheap and recent reprint of *Aucassin and Nicolette* (Lang's translation) in which appears, in a strange hand, a single line: "Abelard to Heloise." It is not a handsome book; I keep it for the inscription. I think it is the most delightful inscription in my collection, and I would give much to know the history of that slim bibelot. If I knew, I should write a novel around it.

"Abelard to Heloise!" Aucassin and Nicolette! What slender tale do you suppose this Heloise gave back? And why, at length, was this little book allowed to slip away for me to find? That, I like to think, is the reason—for me to find! Well, it is in good hands. But Abelard—has he the volume Heloise inscribed? Or shall I find that, too, some day, in some dim, dusty barrow piled with books? Wherever it is, it is mine; I serve notice that it is mine.

There are some famous inscriptions. One is to be found in every bookshop, repeated in a thousand and one volumes with a single change of phrase in each. It is this: "Horace from Mamma." The change substitutes Wilbur for Horace; or Burton, or Llewelyn, or Gilbert, or Paul, or Stanley; sometimes even Rasmussen. The number of volumes thus inscribed is colossal—incredible—and reveals a remarkable phenomenon which, I think, has escaped the attention of all previous writers about books. It is evident, tremendously evident, that "Mamma" has given away more books than any person who ever lived, and it is strange that no one has attempted to run down the facts of the case and give them to the world. The question is: who was—or is—this "Mamma," whose bookly dispensations probably aggregate more than the total registration of the British Museum and the Bibliotheque Nationale? Borrow carried the Bible to Spain and made an admirable job of distribution, but "Mamma" has spread the printed word from China to Peru in a hundred languages and dialects. "Mamma," greatest of colporteurs, dean of all free-library movements, is entitled to a far wider celebrity and recognition than are hers at present, and I am surprised that I should be (as I believe) the first to call the matter to public attention.

A very rare form of inscription, yet one which occasionally may be seen, is this: "Mr. J. Egerton Moss, with the compliments of the Publisher." Not that it seems strange that a publisher should have friends to whom he will make gifts; but one does not expect a publisher to give away the books he has to sell, any more than one expects a friendly baker to distribute free loaves of bread. Still, I have seen this inscription, in one form or another, a number of times, and it has always interested me in the book. The recipient of such a gift-volume, of course, may look it in the mouth, as it were, the while he cynically mutters, "Beware the Greeks!" He may read the work in the firm conviction that there is some "catch" in the transaction; for why should a publisher of books give them away? Obviously, either because they are bad and will not sell, or because the tale is unfinished and the unsuspecting reader will later have to buy the sequel, or because the gift-volume is soiled and cannot be offered for sale, or—you follow the line of thought? That is part of human nature. Similarly, if a benevolent person were to offer the average man a dollar, without provocation, the average man would examine it with minute attention and then ask, "What's the matter with this dollar?"—and that even if the benevolent person were a friend. But why should not a pub-

lisher be proud of a fine novel carrying his imprint? He should be and is; and if there is a catch in his benevolence it consists merely in the pleasant thought, "If Moss likes this thing as well as I think he will, he can't make me angry by spreading the glad tidings from Dan to Beersheba"; and in all probability, he will actually say something of the sort to Moss the next time he meets him. Yet a publisher may hesitate to make gifts of inscribed books simply because they are *his*, and, in the vulgar jargon of the mob, "cost him nothing." One well-known publisher once told me as much. That is too bad. I, for one, should be happy to make a collection of books inscribed to me by their publishers, and shall be more than glad to furnish my address, for that purpose, to any publisher in the business. Books so inscribed should be the best fiction, the best poetry, the best essays, and the more expensive sets.

Meanwhile, I shall continue to delve in dusty barrows in search of "Corn Tassels," by John Keats, and "Harvest Moon," by Percy Bysshe Shelley, for there are many of these waifs that my collection still lacks. A *Tamerlane*, inscribed by Poe to Thomas De Quincey, still eludes me, and I have not given over the notion that some day I shall discover a *Travels With a Donkey*, happily hieroglyphed to a some-

body-or-other by "yours faithfully, R. L. S." Until these appear, however, I shall be content with Ronsard Robinson and Casanova Smith, who, I am happy to inform them, "have not laboured in vain."

A STUDENT OF CATALOGUES

A STUDENT OF CATALOGUES

A FEW years ago, I addressed a postal card to an Eastern dealer in old books, requesting the favor of a certain catalogue which he had advertised as for distribution. It was not my immediate intention to order any of the volumes offered for sale, but the list appeared to be an excellent contribution to the bibliography of a subject—*Quakeriana*—in which, at the moment, I happened to be interested. It occurred to me that it would be a good list to own and to file away for future reference.

As if he had sniffed my purpose in my request, the bookseller, in his reply (written also upon a postal card), set forth that he was forwarding the desired catalogue, then concluded as follows:

"I sent you a number of my catalogues some months ago, but to date have received no order from you. Are you a prospective purchaser, or merely a student of catalogues?"

This was delightful! The genteel reproach and the ingeniously-phrased accusation amused me. I formed a high opinion of the antiquarian who was blessed with such sardonic humor. Obviously he was no servile genuflector to the casual customer. In point of

fact, the catalogue never arrived, as I recall the incident, and as it happens that particular bookseller never yet has seen a penny of my money, although the second circumstance is not a consequence of the first. Heaven knows how frequently I *do* yield to the seductions of an old-book catalogue.

That phrase—"a student of catalogues"—has remained in my mind, however, and I am the old bookman's debtor for it. For every bookman worthy the name is a student of catalogues. From many of the hundreds of sales lists that annually pour in upon him, he may not order a single volume; yet he will read each one with the devotion of an enthusiast and rise up from his curious researches richer by a wealth of information that could have been obtained in no other way. It is only the occasional novel that is more entertaining, more compelling, than a well-filled, well-annotated catalogue of books or autographs. Often the resources of a great library have been ransacked for an enlightening footnote. In the case of fiction listed in such fashion, the tabloid criticism of the bibliographer frequently is truer than the windy rhetoric of the professional reviewer.

Furthermore, it is, of course, only the more remarkable fictions of literature that are allowed that valuable inch of space in an antiquarian catalogue: the ephemeral novel of the hour has no place within

But thus they mette, of aventure or grace;
And he saleweth hire with glad entente,
And asked of hire whiderward she wente,
And she answerde, half as she were mad,
Unto the gardyn, as myn housbonde bad,
My trouthe for to holde, allas! allas!

AURELIUS gan wondren on this cas,
And in his herte hadde greet compassioun
Of hire and of hire lamentacioun,
And of Arveragus, the worthy knyght,
That bad hire holden al that she had hight,
So loth hym was his wyf sholde breke hir trouthe;
And in his herte he caughte of this greet routhe,
Considerynge the beste on every syde,
That fro his lust yet were hym levere abyde,
Than doon so heigh a cherlyssh wrecchednesse
Agayns franchise and alle gentillesse;
For which in fewe wordes seyde he thus:

MADAME, seyeth to youre lord,
Arveragus,
That sith I se his grete gentillesse
To yow, and eek I se wel youre distresse,
That him were levere han shame, and that were routhe,
Than ye to me sholde breke thus youre trouthe,
I have wel levere evere to suffre wo,
Than I departe the love bitwix yow two.
I yow release, madame, into youre hond
Quyt every surement and every bond,
That ye han maad to me as heer biforn,
Sith thilke tyme which that ye were born.
My trouthe I plighte, I shal yow never repreve
Of no biheste, and heere I take my leve,
As of the treweste and the beste wyf
That evere yet I knew in al my lyf.
But every wyf be war of his biheeste,
On Dorigene remembreth atte leeste.
Thus han a squier doon a gentil dede,
As wel as han a knyght, withouten drede.

SHE thonketh hym upon hir knees al bare,
And hoom unto hir housbonde is she fare,
And tolde hym al as ye han herd me sayd;
And be ye siker, he was so wel apayd
That it were impossible me to wryte.
What sholde I longer of this cas endyte?

those careful covers. Few critics are as delicately discriminating, I venture, as the cultured bookseller and as those rare spirits, called collectors, who are his friends and customers. For a modern, that is to say contemporary, writer to find place in a catalogue issued by any one of a dozen houses that I might name, is to receive the accolade, and his chance to survive unto posterity is, in no small measure, on the knees of those biblio-gods who so flagrantly barter his first editions in the public square—accepting in exchange for their original bindings a magnificent advance upon the original price.

Once listed in the attractive pages of the antiquarian cataloguer, a fledgeling poet or a seasoned novelist may conclude that he had arrived. Thereafter he need only continue to publish, a practice that as a rule he is only too happy to carry on. Tall paper, small paper, limited, numbered and signed, his editions flow from his publisher's presses, to be instantly listed in delectable deckle-edged catalogues. And all over the nation and the world, collectors forsake their detective-story weeklies and sit down for an exciting evening with a book list and a pencil.

Really, it is almost as I have painted the picture.

But I think it honest to observe that not all collectors and not all booksellers are cultured. Not all

booksellers, in point of fact, issue catalogues, nor do all book collectors read them. I am speaking of the booksellers who *do* and of the collectors who *do*.

It was Leigh Hunt—was it not?—who so delighted in checking off, with a pencil, such catalogue items as he wished to own. There were always more than he could possibly afford, for Hunt's was the proverbial lean purse of the journalist; but that consideration did not in any way affect his pleasure in sitting down, pencil in hand, for an evening of checking. For that glamorous evening, at least, the books were *his;* possibly for longer—until the day of their sale to another. . . One thinks of the Indiana poetess who stole daily to a certain shop and peeped with sidelong glance at a volume upon a certain shelf. It was a volume long desired, "marked," as later she wrote, "with a price I cannot pay." Yet so long as her wistful glance found the book in its accustomed place, all was well. . . . "Unbought, unsold, the book is mine!"

With reservations, Leigh Hunt's pastime may be recommended. At the very least, it keeps the mind and the heart upon books; it proves the kingship of the player. And sooner or later that sort of thing leads to something else of a happier and more intimate interest to the bookseller—usually an amiable gentleman with white hair and an anachronis-

tic grand manner that is not without its charm.

But I have laid down the proposition that a student of catalogues may learn much from a well-ordered pamphlet that elsewhere must cost him hours of dusty research, if indeed, the information be accessible at all. From an uneven and tottering stack inconveniently at hand, I select a single brochure, more or less at random. It turns out to be a "Catalogue of Autograph Letters, Manuscripts, Etc.," issued by a famous London house; and as it offers, for the most part, memorials of celebrities long dead, upon whose no doubt admirable works copyright has long expired, I cannot be accused of advertising any person in particular. Exclusive of bibliographical detail, let us see what of interest is to be found between these covers.

The muster opens with a notice of the "Commonplace Book of John Adamson" and the members of his family, 1665-1690, and concludes with an inexpensive signature of Brigham Young, written in answer to a request for his autograph. Had it been a catalogue of *books* upon which I had chanced, it would have opened with Gilbert a'Becket and closed with W. B. Yeats, for whatever else may be said of those celebrated names, they will always be outstanding at the beginning and the end of a majority of catalogues. But even with Adamson and Young at

the extremities, the wide scope of the average book list is apparent. In the present one, several centuries of literature and turmoil are bridged in just twenty-four pages.

From Adamson to Matthew Arnold is only a step on the first page, and here is a letter written by Arnold to the Rev. F. Temple (December 22, 1848), in behalf of Lord Lansdowne, for whom the son of Thomas Arnold of Rugby was then acting as private secretary. The letter relates principally to scholastic matters. All this I derive from the explanatory note; and there is something further. *You* may have known that Arnold was secretary to Lord Lansdowne, you may even possibly have known that he corresponded in his employer's behalf with the Reverend F. Temple; but did you know that "letters (written by Arnold) of so early a date and on quarto paper are very uncommon"? I warrant that you did not, and I submit that the information is not without its interest. Injected suddenly into a conversation about Arnold, it might well give one an astonishing reputation for erudition.

Number 9 in the list is a letter of Michael Balfe—Michael *William* Balfe—the composer of *The Bohemian Girl.* It is dated November 2, 1862, and reads in part: "My dear Harrison: I think it wd. be better to begin our rehearsals on the 10th, instead

of tomorrow, as I have still the 3d act to compose."

Immediately we know something of the rapidity with which Balfe composed. Assuming that he began that third act (whatever the opera may have been) the following morning, and began his rehearsals on the tenth, as suggested, there are exactly seven days for the task. What the composition referred to, was, we are not informed, although no doubt Harrison knew; but you see what a weapon is placed in one's hands by this bit of information. Say you are reading a musical journal. Your eye falls upon a sentence: "Rehearsals of 'The Bohemian Girl' (or whatever the thing was) were begun on November 2, 1862." You start up in horror at the inaccuracy, and the following week your letter to the editor, correcting it, is given prominent place in the distinguished journal. You are an *authority*, and possibly you are the only person in the world who has caught the error. Further than this, by looking up a Two Thousand Year Calendar, you may establish all the days of the week between November 2 and November 10 (1862), and arrive at an opinion as to whether Balfe worked on the Sabbath.

I pass on, skipping forty-one letters of William Beckford, a letter of William Blake's, priced modestly at thirty-five English pounds, a manuscript of George Borrow's, a vellum *De Consolatione Philo-*

sophiae of Boethius—all entertainingly described—and reach a letter of Mrs. Browning, written before her marriage to the greater poet of that name. And now we learn that the signature "E. B. Barrett" is particularly rare, and we are enabled to speculate on the mutability of letters. What has become of the earlier letters of Mrs. Browning? Were they destroyed and, if so, why? Or did she write only occasionally before her romantic attachment to Robert? The mystery here is baffling, but a deeper mystery is at hand——

Here is a letter from Thomas Campbell to John Galt, dated the 24th of June, 1815, and concerning (the bibliographer's note informs us) "the conduct of the 7th Hussars at Waterloo, and the fate of the Officers of the Regiment." Does not this hint at either scandal or heroism? And what volume reveals the amazing story? The pulse flutters at the suggestion of that skilfully excerpted sentence. . . . From yet another Campbell letter we learn that on a certain unspecified Wednesday, he "could eat no breakfast." Is it possible that he was still troubled by the conduct of the 7th Hussars?

But we are becoming too droll. There is really much of genuine biographical interest in these letters and these notes; indeed of *auto*-biographical interest. For instance, Coleridge, in a letter to Hessey:

"I take more than twice the time in correcting a proof, and in fact in every mode and appurtenance of composition, than writers in general—partly, no doubt, from the state of my health, but in part likewise from the distressing activity and, if I may use such a phrase, the excessive *productivity* of my mind."

There is nothing new in that, perhaps, but it is sufficiently interesting to hear it from S.T.C. himself.

Interesting, too, is Allan Cunningham's shrewd opinion of the Scotch freebooter, Paul Jones, who became an American naval officer. It is set forth in a letter to William Jerdan:

"I send for your acceptance my Romance of Paul Jones, the first of my attempts at an extended story. . . . Paul was a Scottish peasant—with a courage which naught could daunt and a hatred of royal government which naught would subdue—so fond of fame that he cared not how he obtained it, and so conceited that his vanity marred his fortune."

And here, for public reading, is a letter of Charles Dickens, marked "Private." The price is not excessive and the cataloguer gratifies one's natural curiosity as to its content. It is addressed to Mulloy, the novelist's solicitor, and relates to a bill transaction about which certain rumors to the discredit of Dickens had been placed in circulation. Alluding to

these reports, the author of *Pickwick* concludes:

"Now of course I can do nothing more in this matter without your permission; and I very much wish to let this Mr. Flight know that I have been made acquainted with his statement respecting me, and to demand to know why he presumed to make it. I am the more anxious to do this as, banking at Coutts's and being on terms of intimacy with Miss Coutts and the other partners, I should be seriously annoyed if any such reports came to their ears. If you can enable me to do this, you will add to the obligation which your friendly interest in the matter has already imposed upon me. If not, I hold myself bound to you in the strictest confidence and secrecy."

Letters of Charles Dickens, it appears, bring no such figures as his immense reputation might lead one to suppose. He wrote copiously and often to a horde of correspondents, all of whom seem to have been careful to preserve his communications.

Passing to Disraeli, we reach a quite extraordinary document addressed by the statesman-novelist to Miss Elizabeth Sheppard, accepting the dedication of *Charles Auchester*, a musical novel that once had considerable vogue. Whether Dizzy is merely being polite or is seriously in earnest, his appreciation of the old-fashioned novel is amusing at this time of day:

"It is too profound a book to read very quickly, and too passionate an one to leave the reader, when concluded, in a mood favourable to analytic criticism. The work has the signet of true creation: after you have read it, you continue to live among its vital, tho' peculiar, characters; and the author has succeeded in conveying of their refined idiosyncracies, an indelible impression. . . . No greater book will ever be written upon Music; and it will, some day, be recognized as the imaginative classic of that divine art."

Well, there have been other "classics" as highly touted in their day—*Ships that Pass in the Night*, for instance, and the forgotten *Robert Elsmere*—and it is to be remembered that Disraeli was accepting the dedication.

Even more fulsome, and palpably less sincere, is a letter of Mary Robinson ("Perdita") to "My Dear Friend." It acknowledges the receipt of a sonnet. Concealed in its sticky mazes there is a hint that the subject of the poem was none other than Perdita herself. As follows:

"Everything that I say respecting your beautiful sonnet will fall short of what I feel . . . what then must I think of the last-born beauty graced with all the chaste and pure embellishments of your fertile and classical imagination? I shall treasure up the

flattering gem of poesy, and consider it as a jewel that will shed lustre on the simple wreath which partiality has bestowed on me."

This astonishing outburst is valued at £3 3s, and should be worth it to any descendant of "My Dear Friend."

A letter that I should like to read, but which unfortunately is not quoted, was written by William Godwin, the father-in-law of Shelley. It is a long letter of four-and-a-quarter pages and one half of it relates to the elopement of his daughters. . . . Fragments of Lamb, too, are of interest; but they are fragments only, although priced at the value of full cuts.

Succeeds then Walter Savage Landor, a fine old savage indeed. His letters come high and are highly entertaining. To the Rev. W. L. Bowles, a minor poet of the day, he writes his impressions of France and Italy and a very curious piece of scandal about a lady who was "the most celebrated toast of our Oxford days." Three of the lines relating to the scandalous lady, notes the bibliographer, have been scribbled over—"but can be deciphered," he thinks, "at the expense of some time and patience." Then follows Landor's conclusion: "She is said to have declared that her husband had poisoned her—a Canon

of Como, in my presence, asked 'which of them'—for the fact appears unquestionable."

Another of Landor's letters accompanies a book written by his brother Robert—a gift to a feminine acquaintance. "Neither of us is good tempered," confesses the old Roman. "I am perhaps the worst of the two. However, there is not, and never was, a more honourable, upright Christian gentleman than my brother. . . . He has a good library, some fine pictures, and a large garden kept in excellent order. This is all I know of him, except his poetry, which appears to me to surpass, by many degrees, the best our country has produced in the present century or the last."

That is splendid, and if it is also true, why do we know nothing today of the poetry of Robert Landor? Where are his poems to be found and read?

Another letter is almost equally fine. "Pray do not wish me any more birthdays," writes Savage Landor to a Captain Brickman, the year being 1862. "I am heartily tired of life, and have reason to think it will soon be over. I have been suffering from the sciatica, and from a swimming in my head, worse at night. You will excuse my writing so few lines. I have seven or eight letters to answer from kind friends, with the usual congratulations, and sciatica pains me sadly when I bend over the desk."

But I should like to own that tribute to his brother Robert!

Just a glimpse, now, of Maurice Maeterlinck as critic, thanking Arthur Symons for a copy of *The Book of the Rhymers' Club*, and asserting of its contributors, "*doit être le plus beau groupe de jeunes poetes qui soit en ce moment sur notre planete terre*," a sentiment in which one fancies the Rhymers' Club as concurring; then, unchronologically, we progress to Sarah Jennings, Duchess of Marlborough. As it happens, neither of the Duchess's two letters offered for sale is quoted, but the inevitable note is appended to whet the reader's curiosity. In one she "complains of the conduct of Mr. Guidott," and in the other of "the knavery of Mr. Travers and others." Who, with the money at hand, would not order both at once? He is an artist, this cataloguer. Yet Sarah was a prude—as prudes went in those days—and it is likely enough that the conduct of Mr. Guidott and the knavery of Mr. Travers and his friends had little to do with the termagant herself.

After Marlborough, alphabetically, comes Meredith, and the sage of Box Hill is represented by a poem in French—"Paysage"—a manuscript of twenty lines (unquoted), and by a neat aphorism. The stanzas are on the reverse of a tradesman's card and upon the printed surface is scribbled the aphor-

Guildford

10. ADELPHI TERRACE W.C.
9th January 1902.

Dear G. K.

Do you think there would be anything in shooting out Mr. Warren just now at eighteenpence, with photographs of Miss Brough & the rest & a smashing preface wiping the floor of the universe with all the critics.

I feel very loth to waste time on a row of that sort; but still it is a thing to be considered.

I come up for the B. Council tomorrow.

Yours ever
G. Bernard Shaw.

P.S. The insurance of Ibsen is out of print. Shall I buy it for you & sell handily to make a profit? Would it be well handily to make a profit of it & the insurance effected by Mr. Ibsen's publishers in England?

ism: "Scruples are usually the creatures of perplexity, not of conscience." This cynical observation is obviously a note hastily scratched down at a moment when ink and paper were not available—possibly during the course of a stroll. The card, no doubt, was the first thing that came out of the novelist's vest pocket. Who the tradesman thus immortalized may have been, we are not informed. Was he a coal merchant or a repairer of umbrellas? No matter! He will find his way adown the years and, at length, perhaps, into the British Museum, because, forsooth, George Meredith, upon a day, was seized of an inspiration and had forgotten to carry a notebook.

Follows now an illiterate communication of the dubious Monmouth, after reading which one is not surprised to learn that "holograph letters of Monmouth are of the greatest rarity," a slightly peevish note written by the famous Peterborough—Charles Mordaunt—seeking an appointment as Brigadier, and letters by other celebrated M's, among them John Morley—Christopher is unaccountably absent.

With the N's comes Nelson, and here our stock of miscellaneous information is splendidly enhanced, for two of the four letters offered, notes the annotater, were written by the Admiral with his *right* hand and two with his *left*. One thinks of an empty sleeve and marvels at the degree of expertness that

can say, "This letter was written with the missing arm!" But possibly the dates of Nelson's letters have as much to do with such deductions as other considerations.

An autograph letter of the Earl of Pembroke, we are now informed, is of rare occurrence. Remembering that this nobleman was the friend and patron of Shakespeare—and one of the two Earls to whom the First Folio was dedicated—one hastens to hope that the letter here offered for £25 will solve at least the authorship of the plays. But no! Pembroke is very sorry to hear that Leicester has been "so much troubled with the goute and stone," as he has known by experience the "paines" of them both—"though I thank God," he adds, "I have been very free this year from either."

A human sort of document, but it solves no literary mysteries. Speaking of humanity, however, and its —perhaps humanity—here is a sensational item, under the head of "Trial," that any but a careful reader might skip: "The Proceedings which happened touching the Divorce between Lady Frances Howard and Robert Earle of Essex. The Proceedings against Richard Weston and others for the murder and poisoning of Sir Thomas Overbury. The Trial of Lord Audley for Rape, with his last speech

and execution. Neatly written manuscript, folio, old half calf, etc."

Divorce, murder, poisoning, rape, execution! A fine and timely item, this one, and priced at only twelve shillings. Comment is superfluous. The manuscript advertises itself. But is there any connection here with *Lady Audley's Secret*?

* * *

Well, enough has been written to prove the original proposition, perhaps, and the interest and humors of a catalogue is a subject as yet only scratched. Often it is the accidental humor of a line that amuses, as witness the following endorsement on the outside of an envelope containing a lock of hair: "A lock of Douglas Jerrold's hair, died June 8th, 1857." Or the cataloguer's description of a letter written by Sir Paul Rycaut to the Rt. Hon. Mr. Blathwayt (1699): "A familiar and exceedingly interesting letter asking Blathwayt's advice in regard to journeying to Loo to kiss His Majesty's hand. He was only just recovering from an illness and feared he was not fit to travel, and yet he did not want to incur the King's displeasure by not appearing before His Majesty, with a fine portrait engraved by White, £1 5s." One wonders, naturally enough, why in any case he should wish to appear before His Majesty

with a fine portrait engraved by White, whatever its price.

The catalogue nears its end. Here, at length, is the final page, and upon it an admirable quotation with which to close. It is from a letter of Lord Wolseley, a good and almost forgotten soldier:

"In my opinion the idea that the whole coast of Great Britain and Ireland could ever be blockaded by any hostile nation, so that vessels carrying corn from America could not run into one of our many ports, is a wild nightmare."

Farewell!

But the beauty of all this is, the entertainment is free for the asking.

THE AUTOGRAPH HABIT

THE AUTOGRAPH HABIT

I SUPPOSE it is a bad habit. I gave it up some years ago and am no longer sensitive about it. I am sorry to say that I immediately acquired other habits equally expensive and harrowing, but at least I am through with autographs. No longer do I sit up at night to read the seductive catalogues of shrewd and learned dealers, checking with eager pencil the items I should like to possess. It was a delightful way to spend an evening, but unprofitable. I always ended by ordering some of the items that I checked, and I have never yet been able to afford anything that I ordered. Farewell then to the "AUTOGRAPH LETTER SIGNED," the A.L.S., as it is described in the shorthand of the dealer. What happy memorials of the great and near-great I still possess, I shall keep wherewith to adorn my books, but the ardors and perils of the chase I bequeath to younger and more reckless enthusiasts. May they love it all as I did, and may they come in time to see its folly and its error. It was a joyous pastime. I think I shall always miss it a little.

Glancing over a small boy's autograph collection, not long since, in the handwriting and over the signa-

ture of a well-known American writer, I found the following atrocious sentiment:

"*Autograph collecting has gone out of fashion!*"

I refrain from mentioning the name appended. It may be—poor man!—that autograph collecting has indeed gone out of fashion in so far as *his* autograph is concerned. Broadly, of course, he is quite wrong. *I* have quit, to be sure, but I am certain he has not heard of *that* decision. I could name him fifty other madmen from among my own acquaintances who still collect with a dauntless and unwavering passion. I am sure that there are thousands upon thousands more whom I have not the honor to know. No doubt the well-known American writer had in mind the hideous Album of other days, in which one's cousins, sneering and greatly flattered, inscribed their ridiculous names beneath sentimental couplets.

If scribbling in albums remembrance insures,
With the greatest of pleasure,
I'll scribble in yours.

Something like that. But autograph collecting will always be the fashion while there are persons living who love books and gossip of the writers of books. A

36 Onslow Sq. Brompton

18th August. 1854.

My dear Tait.

I have been 2 months away from England during wh I have done 5 numbers of Newcomes and had 4 smart attacks of illness. Your letter meanwhile has been lying at my house where I found it on my return 2 days since with one from the Ly Mid A.

Repeated illnesses have thrown me back 1/2 a dozen months at least so that I could cannot feel any prospect in execution of coming to the States this year. Nor wd it be worth my while to work change my scheme from 6 to 4 lectures for the 1000 Dollars wh our friends offer me. I shall give the lectures in London and Edinburgh before I go Westward as I did with the first set: and even there I think from the

gentle race—the collectors, I mean—I think they must be the gentle readers to whom so many books have been addressed.

There are, of course, collectors and collectors. The small boy with his scissors and his pot of paste, *is* a nuisance, and the clever young man who asks shrewd questions of celebrities and evokes four-page replies should be abolished as quickly as he is unmasked. But those are only the preliminary stages, and there are many who skip them. However, and it is unfortunate, skipping them means often a considerable delay; means beginning to collect at, say, forty, with a bank account formidable enough to take care of the inevitable disbursements. That is not so easily come by. "Not all can nick it that will, heigho!"—as Master Villon observed about another pastime. And, too, skipping them often presupposes a cultivated rather than an instinctive passion. Why not graduate from the criminal classes? At least, these hardened reprobates have the proper fever. That was a clever dog who wheedled a letter out of old Carlyle, according the letter-writer-of-the-first-part full permission to name a vessel after the philosopher. "May its course be a happier one than mine through life has been," wrote the Chelsea dyspeptic; or words to that effect. When he received his letter, I hope that clever young man was very much ashamed of himself.

But they get over that stage, these clever young men. If they are at heart decent fellows, they do, and often they become quite worthy collectors. That sort of thing is too easy and too cheap. And a letter from a celebrity to oneself is usually quite unimportant. The desirable thing is a letter from a celebrity to a celebrity or to a celebrity's aunt—his own or another's. Of two such letters as I have suggested, I should choose—let us say, rather, that in other days I should have chosen—the latter. It would be far less *composed*, far less written with an eye upon posterity, so much more the man as his aunt knew him. What shrewd old ladies aunts are, are they not? Of all our unselected relations, I think our aunts are the shrewdest and most likeable. Celebrities are always writing to their aunts and neglecting their cousins; with excellent reason, no doubt. The difficulty is to get hold of the letters. A letter from a celebrity to a celebrity, however, is easy to come by. In time, such letters are sure to be sold by the recipients, or by the recipient's children; and then they may be purchased by the bale, if one's taste in celebrities be not too selective. I know a dealer who offers fifty for five dollars, fifty letters; and any number at twenty-five cents apiece. "American Literary," he captions his list, and sure enough they are the veritable letters that have passed between writers and their publishers,

writers and their editors, writers and their friends, writers and their enemies, writers and their creditors. None is of the slightest importance save as it may indicate how Bixby forms his R's and whether Fustian dots his I's. What can a dealer pay for them, if he can afford to sell them at such a price?

That, nevertheless, is a good way to begin; with fifty for five dollars. Then weed 'em out as your taste improves. The field is wide and congested, and it lies fair and broad before you. That is the trouble. It is *too* fair, *too* broad. Collecting, in those early, foolish days, is like picking daisies in a big field. But there will come, at length, a day of heartbreak and despair, when the white-haired man that was once the thoughtless boy needs only a single name to complete an important "set." And that is the blackest day of life. As the celebrity whose letter the collector requires usually is long dead, he may not be reached by ordinary post, and the dealers unanimously report his writings as "very rare." Pity the collector! Even a signature will do, a cancelled check, an unsigned pencil notation, a column of figures; but no scrap is to be had, and the months pass and the years pass. Sometimes, of course, that set is completed, but often enough it is not; and when it is not, what is there left to live for? Nothing—as any collector will tell you—nothing at all, save only the happiness of more

years of anxious search, the danger and delight of poring weekly over fresh consignments of catalogues, the ecstatic apprehension incident to the opening of books of the proper period (for there are signatures that are to be found only upon the flyleaves of books), and all the rest of the excitements and raptures of the chase. That is all! For really the chase is the thing. Possession is as nothing compared with the pursuit. It is astonishing how the interest wanes in that which has been acquired. It is the case of the watch in the store window, the girl in the second flat, the six-cylinder Cooper-Coburn. Once they are achieved, the fancy wanders to something beyond, something that still flees the pursuing hand. And what one wants most of all, stays inaccessible always. One never quite knows, of course, what it is that one wants most of all; one only knows that one does not get it.

And when such a collector comes to die—with all his autographs and books around him—it must be a comforting and easeful thought that soon, having directed his earthly steps aright, he will meet the object of his worship, the man himself, and personally obtain the coveted signature over a friendly bottle in some paradisal or subterranean inn.

It is a curious circumstance that the autograph collector begins and ends his career with a search for

signatures. In youth, he writes blithely and impertinently for "autographs," and happily pastes them in his scrapbook; and when a fine letter is presented by the Doctor or the Preacher, joyously he scissors off the signature and pastes that with the rest; a piece of vandalism that profoundly shocks him in his later days. Then, in age, having acquired practically everything that it is possible to procure in the way of "AUTOGRAPH LETTERS SIGNED," "ORIGINAL HOLOGRAPH MANUSCRIPTS," and the rest of it, he lacks a *Lynch* or a *Gwinnett* of completing his set of the "Signers"; and, lo, his second childhood is upon him. Again he is hunting for signatures, for the historic gentlemen named, after their one notable effort in the signing way, appear never again to have touched quill to paper except to adorn the fly-leaves of half a score of dull, elusive volumes.

But it is after he has passed his first "signature" period, and before he has reached his second, that our collector is maddest and gladdest. Each happy, fleeting month brings its quota of heroes to stand within their niches. His Pantheon, as Francis Hackett wrote of William Marion Reedy, is a union station with gods arriving and departing on all trains. His noon luncheon vacations are passed beyond the low portals of second-hand bookshops, where, oftener than the layman might think, he brings

to light authentic treasures unknown to the wily man who offers them for sale. It is really excellent sport. I know a youth who purchased at a bargain a letter of poor John Clare, the mad poet, and upon its reverse discovered two lines of poetry in the handwriting of Keats—an emendation that subsequently became the subject of a critical paper. Such adventures, naturally, are not of daily, even of annual, occurence, but they *do* happen. They are the possibilities of the game that give it zest. When they fail to occur, the true collector is happy with his Clare letter. One cannot hope always to shoot at a sparrow and bring down a nightingale.

But the boy who begins his collection with the penciled signature of that unimportant lecturer who delighted his infant soul at the local school, soon realizes the importance of *content*; and then begins his greatest happiness—the profound realization that letters are literature, often more a part of the man than his books or his dramas, more human than a lock of his hair, more alive than a score of his photographs.

"The true life of a man is in his letters," according to Cardinal Newman. Dr. Johnson thought otherwise. "There is no transaction," he wrote, "which offers stronger temptation to fallacy and sophistica-

tion than epistolary intercourse"; a view in which he would seem to have been supported by Tennyson:

There lies the letter, but it is
not he
As he retires into himself
and is.

I suspect, however, that the eloquent Cardinal was more than half right, for if indeed man seizes the opportunities of epistolary intercourse to blow or brag, whether consciously or otherwise, he is none the less himself in that performance, and in literature or life he will manifest a similar tendency.

Conceive then the human interest of a letter passed between, say Carlyle and Emerson, between Keats and Fanny Brawne, between Walter Scott and Irving. Infinitely more revealing, it is likely to be, than tale or poem or essay by the same hand. There is indeed much that is worthy of preservation in the humbler letters that pass between friend and friend unknown to fame, in the millions of letters that pass and repass in the mails of all countries, only to find oblivion in the flames or at the bottom of a trunk; the veritable "human documents" that seldom if ever see print; the unpublished masterpieces, the smiles, the tears, the little raptures and sorrows of the many whose headstones in time fleck the hillsides

of the world. A great perished literature, one is tempted to think. But on the whole, these letters that I have been apostrophizing would be the exceptions. In bulk, I suppose, no more wearisome drivel could be imagined than that which is daily lodged in the postboxes of the majority.

I remember falling heir, some years ago, to a great sheaf of letters that my maternal grandmother had written home to the members of her family. They were from Scotland, and they celebrated her revisitation of that land of her birth. Closely and neatly written, they were dated from Edinburgh and Glasgow and elsewhere in the Highlands and Lowlands, and for the most part from temperance hotels. I recalled the dear old lady as a lively soul with a talent for homely gossip, and I imagined a delightful chronicle of sentimental adventure. I planned, in fact, to edit the collection for publication; but that was before I had read the letters. "Yesterday we went to Minnie's," she wrote. "Tomorrow we go to Jim's and Margaret's." "Father had a cold and was in bed all day." "Cousin Nell's sons are doing well in business." So it went. They were not even sentimental. Such glories as my grandmother beheld were merely "wonderful" or "marvelous." Without a pang, I dropped the entire collection into the fireplace, in which there happened

to be a fire. My grandfather, who was by way of being a literary man—he wrote letters to the *Toronto Globe*—had not troubled to write at all. Perhaps it was as well. They are long dead now, rest their souls, and I am rather sorry that they cannot write their impressions of their dour Presbyterian Heaven, for I should like to know whether they found it any more "wonderful" than Scotland. But that is only a personal emotion, the merest curiosity. Nothing they could write would ever approximate literature. Master Wilkins's *Discourse Concerning the Gift of Prayer* would be a perfect *Decameron* as compared with my grandfather's account of the pleasures of Paradise.

I wonder how certain autographic material gets into the market. Letters and manuscripts, of course, often are sold by next-of-kin for what Shakespeare calls "saint-seducing gold," and poverty or waning interest may cause a collector to unload his vans; but there are certain items for which it is difficult to find explanation. Some years ago, I saw advertised as for sale a photograph of Luisa Tetrazzini, inscribed in Italian to President Wilson. The war president was living at the time. The portrait was dated 1920. The bookseller asked thirty-five dollars for his treasure. I would not have given him thirty-five cents, but that is neither here nor there. What

interested me was where the picture came from. Did President Wilson sell it? I would wager that he did not. Did he give it to someone else, and did that someone else sell it? Again, I should think it most unlikely. Was it stolen, and later sold? Possibly, but the chances, I think, are against it. Did it ever reach President Wilson? Probably not; and there perhaps we find an explanation of its presence in the possession of an antiquarian bookseller. Quite possibly some clever autograph-hound, caring for some reason to own a signed photograph of the plump Luisa, wrote to the lady and inferred that the portrait was intended for President Wilson. I don't insist on the explanation, but it is quite within the realm of probability. It may even have been procured with immediate sale in mind. Many are the devious ways by which a miserable living is achieved in our hazardous day!

I imagine that the most difficult bit of special pleading a collector may be called upon to make is that of defending himself and his hobby against the assaults of his wife. Wives are eminently practical, and they instinctively recognize the futility of the collecting habit, save as it has to do with such practical items as silk patches and bits of ribbon. Are there women who collect autographs? Amy Lowell did, but I fancy she was an exception. And, too, her

collection was highly specialized and became the foundation stone of a great biography. I would not for a moment seem ungallant, but I hazard the opinion that women have been largely responsible for the loss of much immortal autographic material. The disappearance of Shakespeare's manuscripts, for instance, long a puzzlesome mystery, probably is no mystery at all. I can almost see Anne consigning them to the flames, crying out meanwhile against the vagaries of literary men; in particular, against the vagaries of a specific literary man of some repute in our day.

"There goes your old 'Hamlet'," I can hear her shout, "and your 'Julius Caesar,' too. A pack of nonsense, littering up the house till one can't step! What's the use of it? I don't see that play-writing ever brought us anything, anyway. If you had an ounce of gumption, you'd get a job, like other men, and be sure of a salary every week." *Et cetera.*

One is glad that the plays got into print, however awkwardly, before the holocaust.

Well, I am through with it all. I should, of course, like to own the original manuscript of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, of *La Reine Pedauque*, of *Alice in Wonderland*, even of one of the Sherlock Holmes tales. So would anybody with sense and taste. But I am done with collecting autographs that after all

are only signatures, and with manuscripts that are only specimens of rather bad handwriting. My tastes have become too expensive, and my pocketbook too lean. To those who shall succeed me, I extend the right hand of fellowship, a capital phrase, and I wish them well. An admirable item with which to begin a collection, would be the original manuscript of this essay; and it is for sale cheap.

BOOKPLATES AND THEIR VANITIES

BOOKPLATES AND THEIR VANITIES

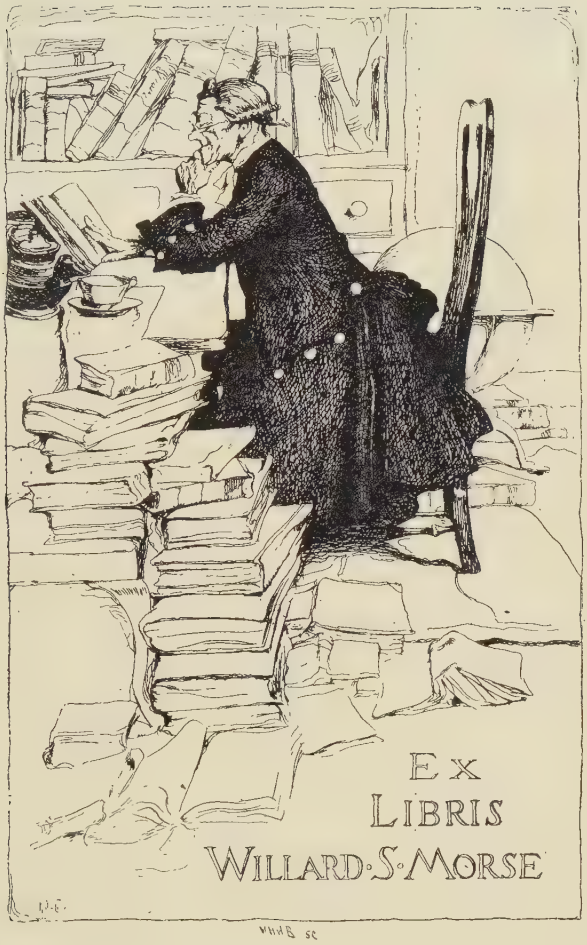
The soul of man may express itself in several ways. It may be reflected in his socks, his necktie, or his bookplate. Formerly it was perhaps best expressed by his waistcoat; but expressive waistcoats are out of fashion. Let us talk, then, for a time, of bookplates. The fad is today less fashionable than the neurosis fetish, yet conceivably it is more permanent. Certainly there is a connection between the two, for if a man's inhibitions sufficiently trouble him, they are bound to find expression; and where better may they be expressed—and traced—than in his bookplate? I pass the idea along to Dr. Freud.

My interest in bookplates began a great many years ago, before I had any idea what a bookplate was. I was sitting in my grandfather's library turning the leaves of a very dull book, and turning them, after the fashion of small boys—and, I believe, of some others whose books read at least equally well that way—from right to left; that is, from back to front. In youth, this is best accomplished by wetting the left thumb, bending the pages into a quarter-

circle, then allowing them to fly back into place, cinematographically, from beneath the withholding thumb. The illustrations fairly *leap* into notice. It is, however, a villainous way to treat a book, and should be discontinued at an early age.

As I say, I was turning the leaves of a very dull book, and finding the illustrations very stupid indeed. Suddenly, at the very front, affixed to the inner board of the cover, I came upon a spirited print of a galleon under full sail—headed away, no doubt, for the Indies. There was a name underneath, not my grandfather's, and a legend in flowing script which, like the name, I have forgotten. Possibly it read, "Magic casements opening on the foam of perilous seas in faëry lands forlorn." I hope it did. There was also a second inscription that was obviously in a foreign language—two words: *Ex Libris.*

The galleon pleased me hugely, but I do not remember asking any questions about it. Probably I imagined that somebody had begun to make a scrapbook of the very dull volume, and idly wondered why the happy idea had not been carried farther. Years later, when I had begun to know something about bookplates, my principal wonderment was why so many persons insisted upon galleons to advertise their ownership of a book. Still, I realized even then that I should have liked one myself. Increasing taste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in such matters, as I like to flatter myself, has taught me the triteness of the galleon symbol, and I now know that I shall never have a bookplate upon which one of the jolly things appears. But I am still very fond of galleons. I wonder what the galleon symbol reveals to a psychoanalyst.

A bookplate has been simply defined as "a printed label intended to indicate ownership in individual volumes." Another definition calls it "a decorative name label, adapted for pasting on to the inside front cover of a book, to denote the ownership of the book." But, although the word "decorative" helps, a bookplate is, of course, much more than either definition would suggest. It is the index of the bookish man, the revelation of his personality, the thumbprint, as it were, of his soul. That, I think, is what it should be. Often, to be sure, it is only a stereotyped galleon.

At any rate, the bookplate is seen to be something movable, something at first detached, something to be pasted into a book. And it is a pleasant thing, is it not, to paste one's name, neatly lettered and illustrated, into one's books? Certainly the ownership of books must be established in some fashion, particularly if one is given to the reckless habit of lending them to friends. When the plate itself is a work of art, it is a very pleasant thing indeed. "Willie Up-

shaw," lettered large in ink, is well enough in youth, when *Ex Libris* is still a foreign phrase, and "Willie from Mamma, Xmas, 1893," will do for the immediate family; but neither inscription is quite the thing for an historical record of either ownership or personality. However, it is not my intention to argue at length the *raison d'être* of the bookplate. Probably it is unnecessary; and there is a small library on the subject for those who are interested.

But before the bookplate there was the written word. There must have been. As I come to think of it, my first experience with a statement of ownership was not that galleon in my grandfather's library at all, but a series of straggling hieroglyphics in the textbook of a friend at school. It was, I suppose, in its way a bookplate. It occurred—part of it—on the inner front board of the volume, and it began:

> *If my name you would like to see*
> *Turn to page 53.*

I knew my friend's name well enough, but I turned nevertheless, and at once, to page 53, after reading his astonishing rhyme; and there I found a second stanza:

> *If for my name you would still explore*
> *Turn to page 104.*

Fascinated, I turned to page 104, and, lo, there was a third stanza:

If my name you still would find
Turn to page 109.

Then I knew that the end must be near, first because my friend was obviously running out of inspiration—his last rhyme had been atrocious—and second because there could not be many more than 109 pages in the book. As a matter of fact, there were 108. Page 109 was the inside back cover, and there, sure enough, I found the name that I had known all along I should find. Thereafter I entered upon an era of book mutilation that pained my relatives as much as it would pain me today.

Something of the sort, I suppose, is to be found occasionally in the ancient volumes that turn up in bin and stall, whether they be of the age of Erasmus or of Dickens. Human nature is the one thing that never changes. A number of book labels, of the printed variety, even reproduce rhymes of a certain crudeness, that probably antedate the printer of the label. One that I recall, runs as follows:

If this be borrowed by a friend,
Right welcome shall he be
To read, to study, not to lend,
But to return to me.

Not that imparted knowledge doth
Diminish learning's store,
But books, I find, if often lent,
Return to me no more.

A *friend,* observe! Yes, it is always the friends who borrow and fail to return. A bookplate, not their own, in a volume not their own, should at least shame them. I often wonder what my friend Blank (name furnished on application) thinks when he takes up my long-vanished copy of Suetonius and sees my plate within.

"A happy future is dawning for these fine things," wrote Eden Phillpotts, on the subject of bookplates, some years ago, "and the time must quickly come when no booklover, worthy the name, can deny himself a work of art to link him with his book, long after his eyes shall read and his hands embrace it no more. . . . What, then," he asked, "should an ideal bookplate be? Emphatically not a picture of the master's crest, or his coat, his house or his library, but a line between his own personality and the treasure it adorns—a sign for other eyes, by which the possessor holds forever a sort of spiritual right in his volume, that owners to come should recognize and respect."

That is the finest definition of a bookplate that I

have seen. Mr. Phillpotts was writing of the ideal bookplate; his words occur in the introduction to a volume reproducing the bookplate work of Frank Brangwyn, an artist who has made some of the finest plates in modern times. The average collector, unhappily, cannot afford a Brangwyn plate, or a Cameron, or an Anning Bell, or a Haldane Macfall. None the less, at no great expense he may boast a quite charming and personal plate.

It seems to me that *taste* must be the keyword in any advice or argument with reference to bookplates. One can find no serious fault with the man—or woman—whose fancy runs to galleons. The symbol, one supposes, is that of escape. Better that a galleon should spread its wings in a book than that no wings shall be spread. Still, the motif has been vastly overdone. The ship model encroaches on the plaster bust of Shakespeare, and may in time drive it from the top of the family bookcase. Certainly, no particular originality is posited in either artist or book owner, by the use of a too-popular symbol. The black derby hat is a useful thing, and often looks well enough upon its devotees, but as a means of identification it is, perhaps, unsatisfactory. But have a galleon on your bookplate, by all means, if you wish.

A house, of course, is another matter. One agrees with Mr. Phillpotts that a house is unthinkable. A

castle in Spain, perhaps, but never a house in Suburbia. Yet I have seen a number of bookplates proudly advertising their owners' equally bad taste in literature and architecture. As well, indeed, hang your coat upon your bookplate. As to the crest and the library, also included in Mr. Phillpotts' strictures, one is less dogmatic. The case of the book symbol is simply that of the galleon: it has been done to death. And that a man might wish to put his crest in his books, when he has a crest, is understandable. The crest, the coat of arms, is the oldest tradition in bookplate chronicle, although in modern times it has not been widely popular. Armorial bearings are, in their way, individual, and they are often highly pictorial and attractive. But Mr. Phillpotts, for one, is glad that we have escaped "the tyranny of couchant lions, rampant leopards, and chimeras dire," and possibly he is right. There is undoubtedly, as he points out, a "more fluent beauty, humor, and imagination" in the modern plate.

As I have suggested, however, one's own taste should dictate one's bookplate, and doubtless an apocryphal taste will achieve a bookplate similarly flavored. Time and again I have chuckled at what individual taste has accomplished. I have noted that a man whose name is Knight is reasonably certain to have a bookplate dominated by a plumed and

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helmeted gentleman upon an armored horse, and that a man whose name is Fisher is likely to fancy a fisherman at ease with a book—preferably a fisherman in buckles and lace wristbands. There is, of course, no earthly reason why Mr. Knight and Mr. Fisher should not paste just such plates into their no doubt judiciously selected volumes, if it is their wish. Two such plates that I have in mind are very attractive indeed. I suggest merely that the symbols are a bit obvious, and that a higher flight of fancy might have produced an even more attractive self-portrait of either booklover. Possibly, in such cases, the artist alone is responsible—the booklover merely acquiescent. The real booklover and collector will, however, have at least a finger in the making of his own bookplate.

Certainly, leaving it to the artist is not always a safe business. Artists, excellent fellows that they are, are not of necessity psychologists. They are, in point of fact, frequently flatterers, since it is their business to please. An elderly maiden lady once said to me, gleefully: "I have had a bookplate made, and it is a beauty! I left it entirely to Mr. Locust (or whatever his name was) and he's really *got* my personality." It was a gorgeous plate, involving peacocks, fans, seashells, books, and something that looked like a rubber plant. Nobody would have

guessed that this elderly spinster's cosmos was as varied and as crowded, and I don't believe it was. I suspect that Mr. Locust (if that was his name) was flattering her shamelessly, but to the initiate his achievement savored of satire. Anyway, a multiplicity of interests is better suggested by a single symbol than by a page of mail-order cuts.

The rather notable fondness of bookplate artists and owners for other days—days of swords and breeches, for example—is readily explained by the pictorial values and possibilities of a painted past; and also, I think, by the average man's secret fondness for dressing up. This latter notion is not one that should be deeply probed, however, since in a large body of instances bookplates are of a more classic, not to say primitive, severity. At any rate, one does not find bookplates in number peopled with the recognizable types and costumes of our own day. Such may exist, but I have yet to see a plate into which there has been introduced either a derby hat or a dinner jacket.

Highly popular always, though, have been such figures of mythology as Pan and Syrinx, Pierrot and Columbine, and the changeless, ever-changing figure of Death; such figures of fiction as Don Quixote and Mr. Pickwick; such figures in literature as Shakespeare and Dr. Johnson. To attempt to indi-

cate even the more widely used figures of legend or history, would be to add another volume to the subject—to write, indeed, a thick volume or two upon pictorial and symbolic art.

Historically, the bookplate is nearly as old as the printed book. The earliest known examples are German. Quite the earliest are certain woodcuts representing a shield of arms supported by an angel, which were pasted into certain books presented by a certain Brother Hildebrand Brandenburg of Biberach —a glorious name—to the Carthusian monastery of Buxheim. That was about the year 1480, and the woodcuts, in imitation of similar devices in old manuscripts, are hand-painted. In France, the earliest discovered plate is that of one Jean Bertaud de la Tour-Blanche, the date of which is 1529, and in England that of Sir Nicholas Bacon, a gift-plate for the books that he presented to the University of Cambridge. Holland follows, chronologically, with the plate of a certain Anna van der Aa—another magnificent name—dated 1597, then Italy, with a plate attributed to the year 1622. The earliest known American example is asserted to be the plain printed label of one John Williams, the date of which is fixed at 1679.

In Germany, however, bookplates were found in considerable numbers, long before the fashion spread

to other countries, and many of the early German plates are of the highest artistic interest. It was not until the seventeenth century that the movable *Ex Libris* became tolerably common in France, prior to which time the more luxurious habit of stamping the cover of a book with a personal device had been in favor. Similarly in England, the book-stamp long preceded the general use of the movable label, and the bookplate of today is a direct descendant of the book-stamp of those wealthy booklovers of old, who could afford their arms or initials, in gold, upon the leather jackets of their books. Thus, the first bookplates, and all bookplates, practically, for a long time afterward, were armorial.

It may be noted that the expression *Ex Libris*, used as a substantive, which is now the recognized term for the bookplate in Europe, found its origin in France.

Much has been written about bookplates since that far day when Brother Hildebrand pasted his first woodcut into a book, and the study of the subject in all its phases and styles is peculiarly interesting to all who love books. In its numerous varieties, the bookplate reflects with considerable fidelity the prevailing taste in decorative art at different periods of the world's history. The active study of bookplates, however, and the fashion of collecting them

for themselves—for they are, of course, diligently collected—hardly goes back farther than the year 1875, in England and America, at any rate. Since then, innumerable volumes have been written about them, and societies of collectors have been founded to collect, discuss, and classify them.

It has become the habit of many—sometimes the bad habit—to remove bookplates from books in which they are found, to swell their owners' collections of plates. Often this is the sheerest vandalism. Again, it is a defensible and perhaps meritorious practice. Bookplates are frequently of higher interest than the old volumes in which they are found, either as specimens of an older decorative fashion or as relics of the personages they celebrate. In the case of the plate of some well-known figure of either letters or history, one would think that the entire volume might better be preserved; yet it is true that not all books are good books, and books *do* pile up. Mr. Cyril Davenport, of the British Museum, thinks that when plates are fastened into books they ought not to be removed. When they *are* removed, he thinks a note should be made, establishing the title of the desecrated volume.

A great deal has been written for and against the practice of removal, and possibly there can be no final solution. Of late years, however, collectors of bookplates have helped to solve the problem—and

thereby have created a new one—by exchanging plates with one another, their own and such duplicates as they have been able to acquire. One is bound to say that they are frequently a confounded nuisance.

So much, then, for that, and for the historical aspects of the subject. The point of all is this: it is a fine and satisfying thing to own a bookplate, and it is a fine and satisfying thing to paste it into one's books. By far the best time for pasting is late at night, when you should be in bed sleeping and there is no one around to offer comment. Then, finest and most satisfying of all, when you have pasted in your plate, is to settle down into the big chair and delve into the book that you have honored.